MR. WEBSTER'S

SPEECHES

AT

BUFFALO, SYRACUSE, AND ALBANY,

MAY, 1851.

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Mr. Webster visited New York, in company with the President of the United States, and several Members of the Cabinet, to join in celebrating the completion of the New York and Erie Rail Road. The distinguished party were received along the entire route with the most enthusiastic demonstrations of respect; and were called upon everywhere to address the assembled multitudes. At Buffalo, the citizens united, without distinction of party, in tendering a public Dinner to Mr. Webster, also inviting him to address the masses in the Park. Similar invitations were extended to him by the people of Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, and every other city through which he passed.

As the Speeches delivered on these occasions were but partially and imperfectly reported, Mr. Webster, in compliance with the wishes of his friends, has corrected the Speeches embraced in the following pages; and they are now entitled to public confidence, and commended to a careful perusal, as containing the deliberate sentiments, familiarly expressed, of the Great Expounder and Defender of the Constitution.

Mirror Office, New York, June 9th, 1851

SPEECHES

OF

HON. DANIEL WEBSTER,

AT

BUFFALO, SYRACUSE, & ALBANY,

MAY, 1851.

SPEECH AT BUFFALO.

Fellow-Citizens of the city of Buffalo, I am very glad to see you; I meet you with pleasure. It is not the first time, fellow-citizens, that I have been in Buffalo; and I have always come to it with gratification. It is a great distance from my own home. I am thankful that circumstances have enabled me to be here again, and I regret that untoward events deprived me of the pleasure of being with you when your distinguished fellow-citizen, the President of the United States, visited you, and received from you, as he deserved, not only a respectful, but a cordial and enthusiastic welcome. The President of the United States has been a resident among you for more than half his life. He has represented you in the State and National Councils. You know him and all his relations, both public and private, and it would be bad taste in me to say anything of him, except that I wish to say, with emphasis, that since my connection with him in the administration of the government of the United States, I have fully concurred with him in all his great and leading measures. This might be inferred from the fact that I have been one of his ordinary advisers. But I do not wish to let it rest on that presumption; I wish to declare that the principles of the President, a sset forth in his annual message, his letters, and all documents and opinions which have proceeded from him, or been issued by his authority, in regard to the great question of the times; all these principles are my principles; and if he is wrong in them, I am, (applause) and always shall be. (Applause.)

Gentlemen, it has been suggested that it would be pleasant and agreeable to the citizens of Buffalo, and their neighbors in the county of Erie, that I should state to you my opinions, such as they are, on the present condition of the country, its prospects, its hopes, and its dangers; and, fellow-citizens, I intend to do that, this day, and this hour, as far as my strength will permit.

Gentlemen, believe me, I know where I am. I know to whom I am speaking. I know for whom I am speaking. I know I am here in this singularly prosperous and powerful section of the United States, Western New York, and I know the character of the men who constitute Western New York. I know they are sons of liberty, one and all; that they sucked in liberty with their mothers' milk; inherited it with their blood; that it is the subject of their daily contemplation and watchful thought. They are men of a very singular equality of condition, for a million and a half of people. There are thousands of men around us, and here before us, who till their own soils with their own hands; and others who earn their own livelihood by their own labor in the workshops, and other places of industry; and they are independent, in principle and in condition, having neither slaves nor masters, and not intending to have either. These are the men who constitute, to a great extent, the people of Western New York. But the school-houses I know are among them. Education is among them. They read, and write, and think. And here are women, educated, refined, and intelligent; and here are men who know the history of their country, and the laws of their country, and the institutions of their country; and men, lovers of liberty always, and yet lovers of liberty under the Constitution of the country, and who mean to maintain that Constitution with all their strength, so help them God. (Great applause.) I hope these observations will satisfy you that I know where I am, under what responsibility I speak, and before whom I appear; and I have no desire that any word I shall say this day, shall be withholden from you, or your children, or your neighbors, or the whole world; for I speak before you and before my country, and, if it be not too solemn to say so, before the great Author of all things.

Gentlemen, there is but one question in this country now; or if there be others, the others are but secondary, or so subordinate, that they are all absorbed in that great and leading question; and that is neither more nor less than this: Can we preserve the union of the States, not by coercion, not by military power, not by angry controversies; but can we of this generation, you and I, your friends and my friends, can we so preserve the union of these States, by such administration of the powers of the Constitution, as shall give content and satisfaction to all who live under it, and draw us together, not by military power, but by the silken cords of mutual, fraternal, patriotic affection? That is the question, and no other. Gentlemen, I believe in party distinctions. I am a party man. There are questions belonging to party, in which I am concerned, and there are opinions entertained by other parties, which I repudiate; but what of all that? If a house be divided against itself, it will fall, and crush everybody in it. We must see that we maintain the government which is over us. We must see that we uphold the Constitution, and we must do so without regard to party. Now, how did this question arise? The question is forever mis-stated. I dare say if you know much of me, or of my course of public conduct, for the last fourteen months, you have heard of my attending Union meetings, and of my fervent admonitions at Union meetings. Well, what was the object of those meetings? What was their purpose? The object and purpose have been designedly or thoughtlessly misrepresented. I had an invitation to attend a Union meeting in the county of Westchester; I could not go, but wrote a letter. Well, some wise man of the east said he did

not think it was very necessary to hold Union meetings in Westchester. He did not think there were many disunionists about Tarrytown! And so in many parts of New York, there is a total misapprehension of the purpose and object of these Union meetings. Every one knows, there is not a county, or a city, or a hamlet in the State of New York, that is ready to go out of the Union, except some small bodies of fanatics. There is no man so insane in the whole State, outside a lunatic asylum, as to wish it. But that is not the point. We all know that every man and every neighborhood, and all corporations, in the State of New York are attached to the Union, and have no idea of withdrawing from it, except those I have mentioned. But that is not, I repeat, the point; that is not the point. The question, fellow-citizens, (and I put it to you now as the real question,) the question is, Whether you and the rest of the people of the great State of New York, and of all the States, will so adhere to the Constitution, will so enact and maintain laws to preserve that instrument, that you will not only remain in the Union yourselves, but permit your brethren to remain in it, and help to perpetuate it? That is the question. Will you concur in measures necessary to maintain the Union? or will you oppose such measures? That is the whole point of the case.

You have thirty or forty members of Congress from New York; you have your proportion in the United States Senate. We have many members of Congress from New England. Will they maintain the laws that are passed for the administration of the Constitution, and respect the rights of the South, so that the Union may be held together; and not only that we may not go out of it ourselves, which we are not inclined to do, but that by asserting and maintaining the rights of others, they may also remain in the Union? Now, gentlemen, permit me to say, that I speak of no concessions. If the South wish any concession from me, they will not get it; not a hair's breadth of it. If they come to my house for it, they will not find it, and the door will be shut: I concede nothing. But I say that I will maintain for them, as I will maintain for you, to the utmost of my power, and in the face of all danger, their rights under the Constitution, and your rights under the Constitution. (Cries of "Good, Good," &c.) And I shall never be found to falter in one or the other. (Tremendous applause.) It is obvious to every one, and we all know it, that the origin of the great disturbance which agitates the country, is the existence of slavery in some of the States; but we must meet that subject; we must consider it; we must deal with it, earnestly, honestly, and justly. From the mouth of the St. Johns to the confines of Florida, there existed in the year of grace, seventeen hundred and seventy-five, thirteen colonies of English origin, planted at different times, and coming from different parts of England, bringing with them various habits, and establishing, each for itself, institutions entirely different from the institutions which they left, and in many cases from each other. But they were all of English origin. The English language was theirs; Shakspeare and Milton were theirs, and the Christian religion was theirs; and these things held them together by the force of a common character. The aggressions of the parent State compelled them to set up for independence. They declared independence, and that immortal act, pronounced on the fourth of July, seventeen hundred and seventy-six, made them independent. That was an act of union by the United States in Congress assembled. But this act of itself did

nothing to establish over them a general government. They had a Congress. They had articles of confederation to prosecute the war. But thus far they were still, essentially, separate and independent, each of the other. They had entered into a simple confederacy, and nothing more. No State was bound by what it did not itself agree to, or what was done according to the provisions of the Confederation. That was the state of things, gentlemen, at that time. The war went on; victory perched on the American eagle; our independence was acknowledged. The States were then united together under a confederacy of very limited powers. It could levy no taxes. It could not enforce its own decrees. It was a confederacy, instead of a united government. Experience showed that this was insufficient and inefficient. And, therefore, beginning as far back almost as the close of the war, measures were taken for the formation of a united government, a government in the strict sense of the term, a government that could pass laws binding on the citizens of all the States, and which could enforce those laws by its executive powers, having them interpreted by a judicial power belonging to the Government itself, and yet, a Government of strictly limited powers. Well, gentlemen, this led to the formation of the Constitution of the United States, and that instrument was framed on the idea of a limited Government. It proposed to leave, and did leave, the different domestic institutions of the several States to themselves. It did not propose consolidation. It did not propose that the laws of Virginia should be the laws of New York, or that the laws of New York should be the laws of Massachusetts. It proposed only that, for certain purposes, and to a certain extent, there should be a united Government, and that that Government should have the power of executing its own laws. All the rest was left to the several States. And we now come, gentlemen, to the very point of the case. At that time slavery existed in the Southern States, entailed upon them in the time of the supremacy of British laws over us. There it was. It was obnoxious to the Middle and Eastern States, and honestly and seriously disliked, as the records of the country will show, by the Southern States themselves. Now, how were they to deal with it? Were the Northern and Middle States to exclude from the Government those States of the South which had produced a Washington, a Laurens, and other distinguished patriots, who had so truly served, and so greatly honored, the whole country? Were they to be excluded from the new Government because they tolerated the institution of Slavery? Your fathers, and my fathers did not think so. They did not see that it would be of the least advantage to the slaves of the Southern States, to cut off the South from all connection with the North. Their views of humanity led to no such result; and, of course, when the Constitution was framed and established, and adopted by you, here in New York, and by New England, it contained an express provision of security to the persons who lived in the Southern States, in regard to fugitives who owed them service; that is to say, the fugitive from service or labor, it was stipulated, should be restored to his master or owner if he escaped into a free State. Well, that had been the history of the country from its first settlement. It was a matter of common practice to return fugitives before the Constitution was formed. Fugitive slaves from Virginia to Massachusetts were restored by the people of Massachusetts. At that day there was a great system of apprenticeship at

the North, and many apprentices at the North, taking advantage of circumstances, and of vessels sailing to the South, thereby escaped; and they were restored on proper claim and proof. That led to a clear, express, and well-defined provision in the Constitution of the country on the subject. Now, I know that all these things are common; that they have been stated a thousand times; but in these days of perpetual discontent and misrepresentation, to state things a thousand times is not enough; for there are more than a thousand persons, whose consciences, one would think, lead them to make it a duty to deny, misrepresent, falsify, and cover up truths.

Now here is the Constitution, fellow-citizens, and I have taken the pains to transcribe therefrom these words, so that he who runs may read:

"No person held to service or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due."

Is there any mistake about that? Is there any forty shilling attorney here to make a question of it? No. I will not disgrace my profession by supposing such a thing. There is not in or out of an attorney's office in the county of Erie, or elsewhere, one who could raise a doubt, or a particle of a doubt, about the meaning of this provision of the Constitution. He may act as witnesses do, sometimes, on the stand. He may wriggle and twist, and say he cannot tell, or cannot remember. I have seen many such exhibitions in my time, on the part of witnesses, to falsify and deny the truth. But there is no man who can read these words of the Constitution of the United States, and say they are not clear and imperative. "No person," the constitution says, "held to service or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on the claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due." Why, you are told by forty conventions in Massachusetts, in Ohio, in New York, in Syracuse, and elsewhere, that if a colored man comes here, he comes as a freeman; that is a *non sequitur*. It is not so. If he comes as a fugitive from labor, the Constitution says he is not a freeman, and that he shall be delivered up to those who are entitled to his service. Now, gentlemen, that is the Constitution of the United States. Gentlemen, do we, or do we not, mean to conform to it, and to execute that part of the Constitution as well as the rest of it? I suppose there are before me here members of Congress. I suppose there are here members of the State Legislature, or executive officers under the State government. I suppose there are judicial magistrates of New York, executive officers, assessors, supervisors, justices of the peace, and constables, before me. Allow me to say, gentlemen, that there is not, that there cannot be, any one of these officers in this assemblage, or elsewhere, who has not, according to the form of his usual obligation, bound himself by a solemn oath, before God, to support the Constitution. They have taken their oaths on the Holy Evangelists of Almighty God, or by uplifted hand, as the case may be, or by a solemn affirmation, as is the practice in some cases. But among all of them, there is not a man who holds, nor is there any man who can hold, any office in the gift of the United States

or in this State, or in any other State, who does not become bound, by the solemn obligation of an oath, that he will support the Constitution of the United States. Well, is he to tamper with that? Is he to falter? Gentlemen, our political duties are as much matters of conscience as any other duties; our sacred domestic ties, our most endearing social relations, are no more the subject for conscientious consideration and conscientious discharge, than the duties we enter upon under the Constitution of the United States. The bonds of political brotherhood, are the bonds which hold us together from Maine to Georgia.

Now, gentlemen, that is the plain story of the Constitution of the United States, on the question of slavery. Gentlemen, I contend, and have always contended, that after the adoption or the Constitution, any measure of the Government calculated to bring more slave territory into the United States, was beyond the power of the Constitution, and against its provisions. That is my opinion, and it always has been my opinion. It was inconsistent with the Constitution of the United States, or thought to be so, in Jefferson's time, to attach Louisiana to the United States. A treaty with France was made for that purpose. But Jefferson's opinion at that moment was, that an alteration of the Constitution was necessary to enable it to be done. In consequence of considerations, which I need not now recur to, that opinion was abandoned, and Louisiana was admitted by law, without any provision or alteration in the Constitution. At that time, I was too young to hold any office, or take any share in the political affairs of the country. Louisiana was admitted as a slave State, and became entitled to her representation in Congress on the principle of a mixed basis. Florida was afterwards admitted. Then too, I was out of Congress; I had been in it once; but I had nothing to do with the Florida treaty, or the admission of Florida. My opinion remains unchanged, that it was not within the original scope or design of the Constitution to admit new States out of foreign territory; and that for one, I never would consent; and no matter what may be said at the Syracuse convention, or at any other assemblage of insane persons, I never would consent, and never have consented, that there should be one foot of slave territory beyond what the old thirteen States had at the time of the formation of the Union. Never, never. The man cannot show his face to me and say he can prove that I ever departed from that doctrine. He would sneak away, and slink away, or hire a mercenary Press, that he might cry out what an apostate from liberty Daniel Webster has become. (Laughter and cheers.) He knows himself to be a hypocrite and a falsifier. But, gentlemen, I was in public life when the proposition to annex Texas to the United States was brought forward. You know the revolution in Texas, which divided that country from Mexico, occurred in the year 1835 or '36. I saw then, and I do not know that it required any particular foresight, that it would be the very next thing to bring Texas, which was designed to be a slaveholding State, into this Union. I did not wait. I sought an occasion to proclaim my utter aversion to any such measure, and I determined to resist it with all my strength to the last. Now, gentlemen, it is not for your edification, I am sure, that I now revive what I have before spoken in the presence of this assembly. I was in this city in the year 1837, and long before I left New York on that excursion, in the course of which I went to the South and returned

here, my friends in New York were kind enough to offer me a public dinner as a testimony of their public regard. I went out of my way, on that occasion, for the purpose of showing what I anticipated in the attempt to annex Texas as a slave territory, and said it should be opposed by me to the last extremity. And in Niblo's Garden, in March, 1837, I made a speech. Well, there was the press all around me. The whig press and the democratic press. Some spoke in terms commendatory enough of my speech, but all agreed that I took pains to step out of my way to denounce in advance the annexation of Texas as slave territory to the United States. I said on that occasion:

"Gentlemen, we all see that, by whomsoever possessed, Texas is likely to be a slaveholding country; and I frankly avow my entire unwillingness to do anything that shall extend the slavery of the African on this continent, or add other slaveholding States to the Union. When I said that I regarded slavery as a great moral and political evil, I only used language that has been adopted by distinguished men, themselves citizens of slaveholding States. I shall do nothing, therefore, to extend or encourage its further extension. We have slavery already amongst us. The Constitution found it amongst us. It recognized it, and gave it solemn guarantees. To the full extent of these guarantees we are all bound in honor, in justice, and by the Constitution. All the stipulations contained in the Constitution, in favor of the slaveholding States which are already in the Union, ought to be fulfilled, and, so far as depends on me, shall be fulfilled, in the fullness of their spirit, and to the exactness of their letter. Slavery, as it exists in the States, is beyond the reach of Congress. It is the concern of the States themselves. They have never submitted it to Congress, and Congress has no right or power over it. I shall concur, therefore, in no act, no measure, no menace, no indication or purpose, which shall interfere, or threaten to interfere, with the exclusive authority of the several States over the subject of slavery, as it exists within their respective limits. All this appears to me to be a matter of plain and imperative duty. But when we come to speak of admitting new States, the subject assumes a new and entirely different aspect. Our rights and our duties are then both different. The free States and all the States are then at liberty to accept or reject. When it is proposed to bring new members into the political partnership, the old members have a right to say on what terms such partners are to come in, and what they are to bring along with them. In my opinion, the people of the United States will not consent to bring in a new, vastly extensive, and slaveholding country, large enough for half a dozen or a dozen States, into the Union. In my opinion, they ought not to consent to it."

Gentlemen, I was mistaken; Congress did consent to the bringing in of Texas. They did consent, and I was a false prophet. Your own State consented, and the majority of the representatives of New York consented. I went into Congress before the final consummation of the deed, and there I fought, holding up both my hands, and proclaiming, with a voice stronger than it now is, my remonstrances against the whole of it. But you would have it so, and you did have it so. Nay, gentlemen, I will tell the truth, whether it shames the devil or not. (Laughter.) Persons who have aspired high as lovers of liberty, as eminent lovers of the Wilmot Proviso, as eminent Free-soil men, and who have mounted over our heads, and trodden

us down as if we were mere slaves, they are the men, the very men, that brought Texas into this country, insisting that they are the only true lovers of liberty; and yet that is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and I declare it before you, this day. Look to the journals. Without the consent of New York, Texas would not have come into the Union, under either the original resolutions or afterwards. But New York voted for the measure. The two Senators from New York voted for it, and turned the question, and you may thank them for the glory, the renown, and the happiness of having five or six slave States added to the Union. (Great sensation.) Do not blame me for it. Let them answer who did the deed, and who are now proclaiming liberty, crying up their free-soil creed, and using it for humbug and trading purposes.

Gentlemen, who aided in bringing in Texas? It was all fairly told to you, both beforehand, and afterwards. You heard Moses and the prophets, (laughter,) but if one had risen from the dead, such was your devotion to that policy, at that time, that you would not have heard him, or listened to him for a moment. I do not, of course, speak of the persons now here before me, but of the general political tone in New York, and especially of those who are now free-soil apostles. Well, all that I do not complain of, but I will not now, or hereafter, before the country, or the world, consent to be numbered among those who introduced new slave power into the Union. I did all in my power to prevent it. (Applause.) Then again, gentlemen, the Mexican war broke out. Vast territory was acquired, and the peace was made; and, much as I disliked the war, I disliked the peace more, because it brought in these territories. I wished for peace indeed, but I desired to strike out the grant of territory on the one side, and the payment of the $12,000,000 on the other. That territory was unknown. I did not know what it might be. The plan came from the South. I knew that certain Southern gentlemen wished the acquisition of California New Mexico, and Utah, as a means of extending slave power and slave population; almost everything was unknown about the country. I did not fall into their idea much; but seeing a quarrel, and as I conceived, seeing how much it would distract the Union, I voted against the peace with Mexico. I voted against the acquisition. I wanted none of her territory, California, New Mexico, nor Utah. They were rather ultra-American, as I thought. They were far from us, and I saw that they might lead to a political disturbance, and I voted against them all, against the treaty and against the peace, and I am glad of it, rather than have the territories. Seeing that it would be an occasion of dispute, that by the controversy the whole Union would be agitated, Messrs. Berrien, Badger, and other respectable and distinguished men of the South, voted against the acquisition, and the treaty which secured it; and if the men of the North had voted the same way, we should have been spared all the difficulties that have grown out of it. We should have had the peace, without the territories. (Applause.) Now, there is no sort of doubt, gentlemen, that there were some persons in the South who supposed that California, if it came in at all, would come in as a slave State. You know the extraordinary events which immediately occurred. You know that California received a rush from the Northern people, and that an African slave could no more live there than he could live on the top of Mount Hecla. Of necessity it became a free State, and that, no doubt, was a source of much

disappointment to the South. And then there was New Mexico and Utah; what was to be done with them? Why, gentlemen, from the best investigation I had given the subject, and the reflection I had devoted to it, I was of the opinion that the mountains of New Mexico and Utah could no more sustain American slavery than the snows of Canada. I saw it was impossible. I thought so then; it is quite evident now. Therefore, gentlemen, when it was proposed in Congress to apply the Wilmot Proviso to New Mexico and Utah, it appeared to me just as absurd as to apply it here in Western New-York. I saw that the snow hills, the eternal mountains, and the climate of those countries, would never support slavery. No man could carry a slave there with any expectation of profit. It could not be done; and as the South regarded the Proviso as merely a source of irritation, and by some as designed to irritate, I was not willing to adopt it, and, therefore, I saw no occasion for applying the Wilmot Proviso to New Mexico or Utah. I voted accordingly, and who doubts now the correctness of that vote? The law admitting those territories passed without any proviso. Is there a slave, or will there ever be one, in either of those territories? Why, there is not a man in the United States so stupid as not to see at this moment, that such a thing was wholly unnecessary, and that it was only calculated to irritate and to offend. And I am not one who is disposed to create irritation, or give offence to our brothers, or to break up fraternal friendship, without cause. The question was open whether slavery should or should not go to New Mexico or Utah. There is no slavery there, there is not the shining face of an African there. It is utterly impracticable, and utterly ridiculous to suppose that slavery could exist there, and no one, who does not mean to deceive, will now pretend it can exist there.

Well, gentlemen, we have a race of agitators all over the country, some connected with the press; some, I am sorry to say, connected with the learned professions. They agitate; their livelihood consists in agitating; their freehold, their copyhold, their capital, their all in all, depend on the excitement of the public mind. Gentlemen, these things were going on at the commencement of the year 1850. There were two great questions before the public. There was the question of the Texan boundary, and of a government for Utah and New Mexico, which I consider as one question; and there was the question of making a provision for the restoration of fugitive slaves. Gentlemen, on these subjects, I have something to say. Texas, as you know, established her independence of Mexico, by her revolution and the battle of San Jacinto, which made her a sovereign power. I have already stated to you, what I then anticipated from the movement, that she would ask to come into the Union as a slave State. We admitted her in 1845, and we admitted her as a slave State. We admitted her in 1845, and we admitted her with an undefined boundary; remember that. She claimed by conquest all that territory which was commonly called New Mexico, East of the Rio Grande. She claimed also those limits which her Constitution had declared and established as the proper limits of Texas. This was her claim, and when she was admitted into the United States, the United States did not define her territory. They admitted her as she was. We took her as she defined her own limits, and with the power of making four additional slave States. I say "we," but I do not mean that I was one; I mean the United States admitted her. Now,

to judge fairly, let us go back to 1850. What was the state of things in 1850? There was Texas claiming all, or a great part of that, which the United States had acquired from Mexico as New Mexico. She stated that it belonged to her by conquest and by her admission into the United States, and she was ready to maintain her claims by force of arms. Recollect that is not all. A man must be ignorant of the history of the country who does not know, that at the commencement of 1850 there was a great agitation throughout the whole South. Who does not know that six or seven of the largest States of the South had already taken measures for separation; were preparing for disunion in some way? They concurred, apparently, at least some of them, with Texas, while Texas was prepared or preparing to enforce her rights by force of arms. Troops were enlisted, and do not you remember, gentlemen, at this time, and in this state of things, how many thousand persons in the South were disaffected towards the Union, or were desirous for breaking it up, or were ready to join Texas; to join her ranks, and see what they could make, in a war to establish the rights of Texas to New Mexico? The public mind was disturbed. There were thousands and thousands ready to join Texas. Now, a great part of the South at this time was disaffected towards the Union. These very men were in a condition to fall into any course of things that should be violent and destructive. Well then, gentlemen, what was to be done let me ask again, as far as Texas was concerned? Allow me to say, gentlemen, there are two sorts of foresight. There is a military foresight, which sees what will be the result of an appeal to arms; and there is also a statesmanlike foresight, which looks not to the result of battles and carnage, but to the results of political disturbances, the violence of faction carried into military operations, and the horrors attendant on civil war.

I never had a doubt, gentlemen, that if the administration of General Taylor had gone to war, and had sent troops into New Mexico, that he would have whipped the Texas forces in a week. The power on one side was far superior to all the power on the other. But what then? What if Texan troops, assisted by thousands of volunteers, from the disaffected States, had gone to New Mexico, and had been defeated and turned back, would that have settled the boundary question? Now, gentlemen, I wish I had ten thousand voices. I wish I could draw around me the whole people of the United States, and I wish I could make them all hear what I now declare on my own conscience, before the Power who sits on high, and who will judge you and me hereafter, as my solemn belief, that if this Texas controversy had not been settled by Congress in the manner called the adjustment measures, civil war would have ensued; blood, American blood, would have been shed; and who can tell what else would have been the consequence? Gentlemen, in an honorable war, if a foreign foe invade us, if our rights were threatened, if it were necessary to defend them by arms, I am not afraid of blood. And, if I am too old myself, I hope there are those connected with me who are young, and willing to defend their country to the last drop of their own blood. (Sensation.) But I cannot express the horror I feel at the shedding of blood in a controversy between one of these States and the government of the United States, because I see in it, in the sight of Heaven, a total and entire disruption of all those ties that make us a great and a happy people.

Gentlemen, that was the great question, the leading question, at the

commencement of the year 1850. Then there was the other, and that was the matter of the Fugitive Slave Law. Let me say a word about that. Under the provisions of the Constitution in General Washington's administration, in the year 1793, there was passed a law for the restoration of fugitive slaves, by general consent. Hardly any one opposed it at that period; it was thought to be necessary, in order to carry the Constitution into effect: the great men of New England and New York all concurred in it. It passed, and answered all the purposes expected from it till about the year 1841 or 1842, when the States interfered to make enactments in opposition to it. The law of Congress said that State magistrates might execute the duties of the law. Some of the States passed enactments imposing a penalty on any who exercised authority under the law, or assisted in its execution; others denied the use of their jails to carry the law into effect; and, generally, at the commencement of the year 1850, it was absolutely, I say it was absolutely, indispensable that Congress should pass some law for the execution of this provision of the Constitution, or else give up that provision entirely. That was the question. I was in Congress when the subject was proposed. I was for a proper law. I had, indeed, proposed a different law; I was of opinion that a summary trial by a jury might be had, which would satisfy the prejudices of the people, and produce no harm to those who claimed the service of fugitives; but I left the Senate, and went to another station, before the law was passed. The law of 1850 passed. Now I undertake, as a lawyer, and on my professional character, to say to you and to all, that the law of 1850 is decidedly more favorable to the fugitive than General Washington's law of 1793; and I tell you why. In the first place, the present law places the power in much higher hands; in the hands of independent judges of the Supreme, and Circuit Courts, and District Courts, and Commissioners who are appointed to office for their law learning. Every fugitive is brought before a tribunal of high character, of eminent ability, of respectable station. Well, then, in the second place, when a claimant comes from Virginia to New York, to say that one A or one B has run away, or is a fugitive from service, or labor, he brings with him a record of the county from which he comes, and that record must be sworn to before a magistrate, and certified by the county clerk, and bear an official seal. The affidavit must state that A or B (as the case may be) had departed under such and such circumstances, and had gone to another State; and that record, under seal is, by the Constitution of the United States, entitled to full credit in every State. Well, the claimant or his agent comes here, and he presents to you the seal of the courts of Virginia, that A or B had escaped from service. He must prove that he is here. He brings a witness, and asks if this is the man, and he proves it; or, in ten cases out of eleven, the answer would be, "Yes, massa, I am your slave; I did escape from your service."

Such is the present law; and, as much opposed and maligned as it is, it is a more favorable law to the fugitive slave than the law enacted in Washington's time, in 1793, which was sanctioned by the North as well as by the South. The existing, violent, and unceasing opposition, has sprung up in modern times. From whom does this clamor come? Why, look at the proceedings of the Anti-slavery conventions; look at their resolu-

tions. Do you find among all those persons who oppose this Fugitive Slave law, any admission, whatever, that any law ought to be passed to carry into effect the solemn stipulations of the Constitution? Tell me any such case; tell me if any resolution was passed by the Convention at Syracuse, favoring the carrying out of the Constitution? Not one! The fact is, gentlemen, they oppose the whole! they oppose the whole! Not a man of them admits that there ought to be any law on the subject. They deny, altogether, that the provisions of the Constitution ought to be carried into effect. Well, what do they say? Look at the proceedings of the Anti-slavery conventions in Ohio, Massachusetts, and at Syracuse, in the State of New York. What do they say? "That, so help them God, no colored man shall be sent from the State of New York, back to his master in Virginia!" Do not they say that? and, for the fulfillment of that, they "pledge their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor." (Laughter.) Their sacred honor!! (Laughter.) They pledge their sacred honor to violate the laws of their country; they pledge their sacred honor to resist their execution; they pledge their sacred honor to commit treason against the laws of their country!

I have already stated, gentlemen, what your observation of these things must have taught you. I will only recur to the subject for a moment, for the purpose of persuading you, as public men and private men, as good men and patriotic men, that you ought, to the extent of your ability and influence, to see to it, that such laws are established and maintained as shall keep you, and the South, and the West, and all the country together, as far as it is just and right, and as far as the Constitution demands. I say, that what is demanded of us is, to be up to our constitutional duties, and to do for the South what the South have a right to demand.

Gentlemen, I have been some time before the public. My character is known, my life is before the country. I profess to love liberty as much as any man living; but I profess to love American liberty, that liberty which is secured to the country by the Constitution under which we live; and I have no great opinion of that other and higher liberty which goes over the restraints of law and of the Constitution. I hold the Constitution of the United States to be the bulwark, the only bulwark, of our liberties and of our national charter. I do not mean that you should become slaves under the Constitution. That is not American liberty. That is not the liberty of the Union for which our fathers fought, that liberty which has given us a right to be known and respected all over the world. I mean only to say, that I am for Constitutional Liberty. It is enough for me to be as free as the Constitution of the country makes me.

Now, gentlemen, let me say, that, as much as I respect the character of the people of Western New York, as much as I wish to retain your good opinion, if you should ever place me, hereafter, in any connection with public life, let me tell you now that you must not expect from me the slightest variation, even of a hair's breadth, from the Constitution of the United States. (Cries of "Good, good, good") I am a Northern man. I was born at the North, educated at the North, have lived all my days at the North. I know five hundred Northern men to one Southern man. My sympathies, all my sympathies, my love of liberty for all mankind, of every color, are the same as yours. My affections and hopes in that respect are exactly like yours. I wish to see all men free, all men happy. I have few

personal associations out of the Northern States. My people are your people. And yet I am told sometimes that I am not a liberty man, because I am not a Free-soil man. (Laughter.) What am I? What was I ever? What shall I be hereafter, if I could sacrifice, for any consideration, that love of American liberty which has glowed in my breast since my infancy, and which, I hope, will never leave me till I expire? (Applause.)

Gentlemen, I regret that slavery exists in the Southern States, but it is clear and certain, that Congress has no power over it. It may be, however, that in the dispensations of Providence, some remedy for this evil may occur, or may be hoped for hereafter. But, in the meantime, I hold on to the Constitution of the United States, and you need never expect from me, under any circumstances, that I shall falter from it; that I shall be otherwise than frank and decisive. I would not part with my character as a man of firmness and decision, and honor and principle, for all that the world possesses. You will find me true to the North, because all my sympathies are with the North. My affections, my children, my hopes, my everything, are with the North. But when I stand up before my country, as one appointed to administer the Constitution of the country, by the blessing of God I will be just. (Great applause.)

Gentlemen, I expect to be libeled and abused. Yes! libeled and abused. But it don't disturb me. I have not lost a night's rest for a great many years from any such cause. I have some talent for sleeping. (Laughter.) And why should I not expect to be libeled? Is not the Constitution of the United States libeled and abused? Do not some people call it the production of hell? Is not Washington libeled and abused? Is he not called a bloodhound on the track of the African negro? Are not our fathers libeled and abused by their own children? And ungrateful children they are. How, then, shall I escape? I do not expect to escape; but, knowing these things, I impute no bad motive to any men of character and fair standing. The great settlement measures of the last Congress are laws. Many respectable men, representatives from your own State and from other States, did not concur in them. I do not impute any bad motive to them. I am ready to believe they are Americans all. They may not have thought them necessary; or they may have thought these laws would be enacted without their concurrence. Let all that pass away. If they are now men who will stand by what is done, and stand up for their country, and say that these laws were passed by a majority of the whole country, and we must stand by them and live by them, I will respect them all as friends.

Now, gentlemen, allow me to ask of you, to-day, What do you think would have been the condition of the country, at this time, if these laws had not been passed by the last Congress? If the question of the Texas boundary had not been settled? New Mexico and Utah had been left as desert places, and no government had been provided for them? And if the other great questions to which State laws had opposed so many obstacles, in the restoration of fugitives, had not been settled, I ask what would have been the state of this country now? You men of Erie county, you men of New York, I conjure you to go home to-night and meditate on this subject. What would have been the state of this country, now at this moment, if these laws had not been passed? I have given my opinion that we should have had a civil war. I refer it to you, therefore,

for your consideration; meditate on it; do not be carried away by any notions or ideas of metaphysics; think practically on the great question of what would have been the condition of the United States at this moment, if we had not settled these agitating questions. I have stated that, in my opinion, there would have been a civil war.

Gentlemen, will you allow me, for a moment, to advert to myself? I have been a long time in public life, of course not many years remain to me. At the commencement of 1850, I saw something of the condition of the country, and I thought the inevitable consequence would be civil war. I saw danger in leaving Utah and New Mexico without any government, a prey to the power of Texas. I saw the condition of things arising from the interference of some of the States in defeating the operation of the Constitution in respect to the restoration of fugitive slaves. And, gentlemen, I made up my mind to encounter whatever might betide me; and, allow me to say, something which is not entirely unworthy of notice. A member of the House of Representatives told me that he had made a list of 140 speeches which had been made in Congress on the slavery question. "That is a very large number, my friend," I said; "but how is that?" "Why," said he, "a Northern man gets up and speaks with considerable power and fluency until the Speaker's hammer knocks him down. Then gets up a Southern man, and he speaks with more warmth. He is nearer the sun, and he comes out against the North. He speaks his hour, and is in turn, knocked down. And so it has gone on until I have got 140 speeches on my list." "Well," said I, "where are they? and what are they?" "If the speaker," said he, "was a Northern man, he held forth against slavery; and if he was from the South, he abused the North; and all those speeches were sent by the members to their own localities, where they were the cause of the local irritation which existed at the time. No man read both sides. In this way the other side of the question was not heard; no man read both sides." I thought that in this state of things something was to be done. You cannot suppose that I was indifferent to the danger. I am a Massachusetts man, and know what Massachusetts used to be. I am a Massachusetts man. Massachusetts has kept me a great while in Congress. I will honor her; I respect her, and mean to do so as long as I live. (Applause.)

Well, gentlemen, suppose that on that occasion I had taken a different course from what I did take? If I may allude to anything so insignificant as myself, suppose that, on the 7th of March, instead of making a speech that would, as far as my power went, reconcile the country, I had joined in the general clamor of the party? Suppose I had said, "I will have nothing to do with any accommodation; we will admit no satisfaction; we will let Texas invade New Mexico; we will leave New Mexico and Utah to take care of themselves, and we will plant ourselves on the Wilmot Proviso, and let the devil take the hindermost?" Now, gentlemen, I don't mean to say that great consequences would have followed from that; but suppose I had taken such a course? How could I be blamed for it? Was I not a Massachusetts man? Did I not know Massachusetts sentiments and prejudices? But what of that? I am an American! (Great applause.) I was made a whole man, and I don't mean to make myself half a one. (Tremendous outbursts of applause.) I felt I had a duty to perform to my country, to my own reputation; for I flattered myself

that a service of forty years had given me some character. I thought it was my duty, and I did not care what was to be the consequence; I felt it was my duty to come out, to go for my country, and my whole country, and to exert any power I had to keep that country together. (Great applause.) I cared for nothing, I was afraid of nothing, but meant to do my duty. Duty performed makes a man happy; duty neglected makes a man unhappy. I therefore, gentlemen, in the face of all circumstances, and all dangers, was ready to go forth and do what I thought my country, your country, demanded of me. And, gentlemen, allow me to say here, to-day, that if the fate of John Rogers had been presented to me; if I had seen the stake; if I had heard the thorns already crackling; by the blessing of Almighty God, I would have gone on, and discharged the duty which I thought my country called upon me to perform. I would have become a martyr to save that country.

And now, gentlemen, farewell. Live and be happy. Live like patriots. Live like Americans. Live in the enjoyment of the inestimable blessings which your fathers prepared for you; and if anything that I may do hereafter should be inconsistent, in the slightest degree, with the opinions and principles which I have this day addressed to you, then discard me forever from your recollection.

MR. WEBSTER'S SPEECH

AT

THE DINNER GIVEN HIM AT BUFFALO.

Mr. Mayor and Fellow-Citizens of the city of Buffalo, I know that, in regard to the present condition of the country, you think as I think, that there is but one all-absorbing question, and that is the preservation of this Union. (Cheers.)

Mr. Mayor and Gentlemen: If I have strength, I propose to say something to you and your fellow-citizens on that subject to-morrow. (Outbursts of applause for some time.) In this social interview and intercourse, gentlemen, I would not willingly aspire to such a lofty, all-important theme. I desire, rather, on this occasion, to address you as citizens of Buffalo, many of whom I have had the pleasure of seeing in former times, many of whom belong to the generation, which has grown up since I was first here; but with all of whom I feel a sympathy for the great prosperity which has distinguished their city, and the fair prospect which Providence holds out before them. (Applause.) Gentlemen, I have had the pleasure of being in the good city of Buffalo three times before this visit. I came here in 1825, with my family, accompanied by Justice Story and his family. We came mainly to see that all-attractive neighbor of yours, the Falls of Niagara. For, gentlemen, you and your posterity will never be without a distinguished neighbor in your vicinity. We came to Buffalo. I remember it was said, at that time, there were 2500 people in it. (Laughter.) Even that startled, because it was fresh in my recollection when it was only a waste, and when, as a member of Congress, I was called upon to ascertain the value of certain houses which were destroyed by the assaults of the British. I came here afterwards, gentlemen, in 1833. Your city then had enlarged, manufactories had commenced, prosperity had begun. I had the pleasure of addressing you or your fathers, or both, in the Park, and I remember I was told, among other things, that I might say, with safety, that there were fifteen or eighteen steamboats on Lake Erie. (Laughter and applause.) And I remember another thing, gentlemen, and I hope some parties to that transaction are here.

The mechanics of Buffalo did me the great honor, of tendering to me a present of an article of furniture, made from a great, glorious black-walnut tree, which grew to the south of us. They signified their desire to make a table out of that walnut tree, and send it to me. The table was made, and I accepted it, of course, with great pleasure. When I left here in July, the tree was standing; and in about five weeks there was an elegant table, of beautiful workmanship, sent to my house, which was then in

Boston. When I went to Marshfield it followed me to the sea-side, and there it stands now in the best room in my house, and there it will stand as long as I live, and I hope as long as the house shall stand. (Great applause.) And I take this occasion to reiterate my thanks for that beautiful present. (Applause.) I am proud to show it; I am proud to possess it; I am proud in all the recollections that it suggests. (Applause.) I was again in Buffalo some fourteen years ago, on my return from the West. That, I think, was in July also. I left the sea-coast in May. It was soon after the termination of General Jackson's administration, and the commencement of Mr. Van Buren's. I recollect I traveled by the way of the Pennsylvania Railroad and Canals, and so on to the Ohio; and I was on the Ohio River, I think, at Wheeling, on the 25th of May, when we heard of the failure of all the Banks, the breaking up of all the credit of the country, and Mr. Van Buren's proclamation for an extra session of Congress. That rather hastened our progress. I went by the way of Kentucky, Missouri, Illinois, and had the pleasure of seeing my fellow-citizens of Buffalo on my return. Now, gentlemen, it is a great pleasure for me to say, that between that time and the present, the population of your city has augmented at least one-half. (Applause.) And here is Buffalo, a city of 50,000 inhabitants.

It is, undoubtedly, one of the wonders of the age, and of this country. I enjoy it, gentlemen, with a degree of pleasure inferior only to your own, because we are of the same country, because we participate in the same destiny, and because we are bound to the same fate for good or evil. (Great cheering.) All that is my interest is your interest, at least I feel it to be so; and there is not in this region, or beyond the Lakes, a city planned, a tree felled, a field of wheat planted, or any other mark of prosperity, in which I, for one, do not take an interest. But then, gentlemen, one thing strikes me. You are all a young race here. (Cheers.) Here is my friend near me. (Pointing to Hon. Albert H. Tracy.) We were young men together. It seems to me but a short time ago, and here we are. (Applause.) Now, who do I see around me here? Why, the rising generation have taken possession of Buffalo. (Applause.) Ye fathers, be frightened! Ye grandfathers, be alarmed! The youth of Buffalo have taken possession of the city. (Applause.) But then, you unmarried women of Buffalo, and you, young wives of Buffalo, be neither frightened nor alarmed; for those who have taken possession will be your protectors. (Laughter.) And I believe that this is true throughout the whole county of Erie. The strong arms of young men till the soil. The vigorous resolution which takes hold of any improvement, and sustains every public project, takes counsel, no doubt, from age and experience; but young men in this country push forward everything; complete everything.

Gentlemen, I need not say that this great neighborhood of yours, and this great State of yours, are full of things most striking to the eye and to the imagination. The spectacle which your State presents; the waters of New York; the natural phenomena of New York; are exciting to a very high degree. There is this noble river, the Niagara; the noble Lake from which it issues; the Falls of Niagara, the wonder of the world! the lakes and waters of a secondary class. Why, how many

things are there in this great State of New York, that attract the wonder and draw the attention of Europe? I had the pleasure of being a few weeks in Europe, and every one asked me, how long it took to go to Niagara Falls, and how long to see other curiosities. New York, in all its relations, in its falls, its rivers, and secondary waters, is attractive to all the world. But then there is New York, in the State of New York. Gentlemen, the commercial character so far pervades the minds of commercial men all over the world, that there are many men who are very respectable and intelligent, who do not seem to know there is any part of the United States but New York. (Laughter.) I was in England, and when I was there it was asked of me, if I did not come from New York. (Great laughter.) I told them my wife came from New York. (Continued laughter.) That is something. (Great laughter.) Well, gentlemen, I had the honor, one day, to be invited to a State-dinner, by the Lord Mayor of London. He was a portly and a corpulent gentleman. (Laughter.) He had a big wig on his head, all powdered and ribboned down behind, and I had the honor to sit between him and the lady Mayoress; and there were 300 guests, with all the luxuries and gorgeousness of the Lord Mayor's dinner. By and by, in the course of the proceedings, his lordship thought proper, soon after the cloth was removed, to take notice of his American guest. He seemed not to know who I was. He knew I was a Senator; but of the United States he seemed to have but little idea of any place but New York. (Laughter.)

He arose: "Gentlemen," said he, "I give you the health of Mr. Webster, a member of the upper Senate of New York." (Great outburst of laughter.) Well, gentlemen, it was a great honor to be a member of any Senate of New York, but if there was an upper Senate, to be a member of that would be a great honor, indeed. (Tremendous laughter.) Gentlemen, New York, the State of New York, let me indulge in a moment's reflection on that great theme! It has so happened in the dispensation of things, that New York stretches from boundary to boundary, through our whole country. Your fellow-citizens, to-day, are eating clams at Montauk Point, 700 miles from here, and you are regaling on lake trout. You stretch along and divide the whole country. New York stretches from the frontier of Canada to the sea. New York divides the Southern States from the Eastern. Here she is with two heads; one down at New York, and the other at Buffalo, like a double-headed snake, and there she lies. Well, what are you to do with her? Fixed, firm and immovable, there she is. (Applause.) It has pleased God, in assigning her a position in the configuration of the earth's surface, to cause her to divide the whole South from the East, and she does so, physically and geographically. As she stretches here, in the whole length and breadth, she divides the Southern from the Eastern States. But, gentlemen, that is her inferior destiny, her inferior characteristic; for, if I do not mistake all auguries, her higher destiny is likewise to unite all the States in one political Union. (Vociferous applause and cheers.)

Gentlemen, nothing so fills my imagination, or comes up more to my idea of a great, enterprising, and energetic State, than those things which have been accomplished by New York, connected with commerce and internal improvements. I honor you for it. When I consider that your canal runs from the Lakes to tide-water; when I consider also that you

have a railroad from the Lake to tide-water; and when I examine, as I have examined, that stupendous work, hung up, as it were, in the air, on the southern range of mountains from New York to Lake Erie; when I consider the energy, the power, the indomitable resolution which effected all this, I bow with reverence to the genius and people of New York, whatever political party may lead, or however wrong I may deem any of them to act in other respects. It takes care of itself, it is true to itself, it is true to New York; and being true to itself, it goes far in establishing the interest of the whole country, in my opinion. For one, I wish it so to proceed. I know that there are questions of a local and State character with which I have nothing to do. I know there is a proposition to make this canal of yours greater and broader, if I may say so, to give to New York and its commerce more power to let out what it has, with greater facility. I know not how that may comport with State politics or State arrangements, but I shall be happy to see the day, when there shall be no obstruction, or hindrance, in any article of trade, or commerce, going out right, straight and strong, with breadth enough, and margin enough, and room enough to carry all to its market. May I say, gentlemen, that a broad, deep, and ample canal realizes, and more than realizes, what the poet has said of the River Thames:

> "Oh, could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
> My great example, as it is my theme!
> Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull,
> Strong without rage, without o'erflowing, full."

But, gentlemen, there are other things about this State of yours. You are here at the foot of Lake Erie. You look out on the far expanse of the West. Who have come here? Of whom are you composed? You are already a people of fifty thousand, a larger population than that of any New England city, except Boston; and yet you are but of yesterday. What is your population? A great many of them are my countrymen, and I see them with pleasure; but these are not all, there are also Irish and Germans. I suppose, on the whole, and in the main, they are safe citizens; at any rate, they appear well disposed, and they constitute a large portion of your population. That leads us to consider generally what is the particular position of our country, and of your city, as one of the great outlets to the West, in regard to this foreign immigration. The emigration to this country is enormous—it comes from Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, &c. I remember it used to be a simile, when anything of a sudden or energetic nature took place, to say that it "broke out like an Irish rebellion, forty thousand strong, when nobody expected it." Forty thousand strong does not begin to compare with the emigration to the United States. Emigration comes here with a perfect rush from every part of Ireland; from Limerick and the Shannon, from Dublin and from Cork; emigrants come also from the Northern ports, from Londonderry and Belfast, and here they are. Into this country they come, and will continue to come; it is in the order of things, and there is no possibility of preventing it. Gentlemen, it is about three centuries and a half since Columbus discovered America, and he came here by authority of the Spanish Government. He gathered up some gold, and went back with a great name. It is a much shorter time since the Irish

discovered America, and they come in much greater numbers; but they don't come here with the idea of carrying back money, or fame, or a name, but mean to live here forever. They come to remain among us, and to be of us, and to take their chances among us. Let them come.

There are also Germans. Your city, I am told, has a very large number of thrifty, industrious German people. Let them also come. If His Majesty of Austria, and the Austrian Government, will allow them to come, let them come. (Great applause.) All we desire, whosoever come, is, that they will Americanize themselves; that, forgetting the things that are behind, they will look forward; and if they look as far as Iowa and Minnesota, they will not look a rod too far. I know that many from Europe come here, who have been brought up to different pursuits, to different forms of application, and even to different systems of agriculture; but, as a general thing, I believe it is true, that when they are removed from the temptations of the cities of the Atlantic coast, and when they get into regions, where trees are to be felled, and land cleared, they prove themselves worthy and respectable citizens; and, perhaps, gentlemen, you will excuse me if, without too long a speech, I say a little relative to our American system on this subject of foreign emigration. In the Declaration of Independence, declared, as you all know, on the 4th of July, 1776, a solemn and formal complaint is made against the British King, that he sought to prevent emigration from Europe to the colonies, by refusing his assent to reasonable laws of naturalization, by reason of which, it was stated, the country did not fill up, and the public lands were not purchased. It is worthy the attention of any gentleman, who wishes to acquaint himself with the early history of the country in this respect, to refer back to the naturalization laws passed in the time of Washington. Every one can see what was the prevailing idea at that period. The idea of encouraging emigration from Europe was universal, and it was desired that those, who wished to become naturalized, should become acquainted with our system of government before they voted; that they should have an interest in the country; that they might not be led away by every designing demagogue. At that day, nobody foresaw such developments, and such enlargement in the commerce of the country, as we now see; and, therefore, in the early periods of Washington's administration, they were looking to see how they should pay the debt of the Revolution. Whatever we may think of it now, their great resource to pay their debts was, as they thought, the public domain. They had obtained, before the Constitution was formed, a grant of the Northwest Territory, which was known to be capable of furnishing great products by agricultural labor. The Congress of that day looked to this. They had no idea how sudden would be the great increase of our commerce, or how plentiful would be the revenue from that source; and, therefore, their main resource was to see how far they could encourage foreign emigration, (which, it was expected, would bring capital into the country.) with an idea of such a conformity with our American system, and to American institutions, as would render emigration safe, and not dangerous to the common weal.

Gentlemen, we are not arbiters of our own fate. Human foresight falters and fails. Who could foresee or conjecture at that day, what our eyes now see and behold? We see this for good or for evil. Nor

could we stay this immigration if we would. We see there is a rush of people from Europe to America, that exceeds, in a single month, and at the single port of New York, the population of many single cities on the Atlantic coast. This is the case, and it is to be met and to be considered. It would be foolish to attempt to obstruct it, if obstruction were safe. The thing can't be done. You may remember, gentlemen, (though I am too modest to suppose that you remember much about it,) that, in my correspondence with Lord Ashburton, who came out here to negotiate the Treaty of '42, we examined the subject of the impressment of American citizens. Up to that day, England had insisted on the right to visit every American ship in the time of war, and if she found any Englishmen, Irishmen, or Welshmen on board of her, to press them into her service, on the ground that they could not transfer their allegiance. I need not say, gentlemen, that this subject had been a matter of negotiation. It was, at one time, suggested by the British minister, that the right should be exercised only in certain latitudes. At another time it was suggested, that this right should not be extended to the deprivation of any American vessel of her crew. I am afraid, or ashamed, gentlemen, indeed I don't know that I ought to say it, but with your permission I will say it, that on that occasion it was decided that every man on board of an American vessel, either mercantile or naval, was protected by the flag of America. (Tremendous applause.) No matter if his speech did betray him; no matter what brogue was on his tongue; if the stars and stripes were over him, he was for that purpose, while on board an American vessel, an American citizen. (Cheers.) Well, gentlemen, as we are indulging in a sort of saturnalia, and as we are talking of ourselves a little, (cries of "Who?" "Go on,") let me say, that from that day to this, we have heard of no pretensions on the part of the British Government, that it could send an officer on board of any American ship, and take from her any human being whatever, and never shall. (Great applause.)

Lord Ashburton, with whom I negotiated and corresponded on that occasion, was a judicious and wise man. He had been a good deal in this country. He was married in this country. He knew something of this country; and he saw various relations between this country and England in a far more philanthropical point of view than most others, and he stated in a letter, which is on record somewhere: "I must admit that when a British subject, Irish, English, or Welsh, becomes an American, and claims no longer the protection of his own country, his own country has no right to call him a subject, and to put him in a position to make war on his adopted country; and it appears to me," he added, "that we may count it among the dispensations of Providence, that these new facilities of transporting men from country to country, by the power of steam, and quickly, are designed by a high wisdom." He said, "We have more people than land, and you have more land than people. Take as many from us as you please, or as please to come. That seems to be the order of things; and it is not to be stopped." I told him that was my opinion too. Gentlemen, this emigration is not to be stopped; we must keep things as they are; we must impress all who come here with the necessity of becoming Americans. We must teach them; we must endeavor to instill American sentiments into all their bosoms. (Prolonged Applause.) Gentlemen, if it were not so late in the evening, I would say a few

more words (cries of " Go on, Go on") about the public lands of this country, and the best disposition to be made of them. What shall we do with them? They amount to a vast extent of territory, rich in its natural fertility; but can any one tell me what is the value of land unconnected with cultivation and social life? A thousand acres would not, in such a case, be of the value of a dollar. What is land worth in the extreme interior? Land is a theatre for the application and exhibition of human labor; and when human labor goes upon it, and is exerted, then it creates its value, and without it, it is not worth a rush, from " Dan to Beersheba." I do not wish to say, on every acre of land there must be a settlement; but there must be human labor somewhere near it; there must be something besides the mathematical division apportioning it into sections, half sections, and quarter sections, before land is of any value whatever.

But, gentlemen, we have had a series of wonderful events in our commercial relations. The commerce of the country is filling the coffers of the country. It has supplied, and now supplies, every want of the government. What, then, shall we do with the public lands? During the last Congress, acts were passed, distributing large quantities of them, varying from 160 acres, or more, down to 40 acres, to those who had rendered military service to the country. This was all very well; nobody goes further than I do, in desiring to make happy those who have borne arms in their country's cause, as well as their widows and orphans; but, this does not appear to me to answer the exigencies of the case. What is to be done? What is to become of those who come to this country, and have nothing to buy land with? That's the question, gentlemen; the last measure proposed by me while in the last Congress, was the short and simple proposition, that every man of twenty-one years of age, who would go on any uncultivated land in the country, and take up 160 acres and cultivate it for five years, should thereby make it his own, and there to be an end of the public right; and if his widow and children did the same, they should have it. One of the great evils of this military bounty business is, that when warrants are issued, manage it as you will, they fall into the hands of speculators, and do not accrue to those whom it was designed to benefit. They sell for a trifle, and they fall into the hands of speculators, as I have already stated. Let me tell you an anecdote on this subject: I brought forward this matter in the Senate of the United States, and soon afterwards I received a letter from Europe, stating that it was wrong and unjust, because it would interfere with the rights of those who had purchased warwants, to settle on the public lands, as a matter of speculation. (Laughter.) I wrote back that it was just the thing I wished. I was glad it was so, and I had desired it should be so. My proposition was, that these lands should not be alienated; that they should be free of claims for debt; that they should be free of debt; that they should not be transferable, and if a man left his land before five years, he should lose it.

My proposition was, that the lands granted under it should not be alienable; should not be subject to alienation by law; that a man entering upon should stay upon, should cultivate it for five years; or if he should not live, then his wife or children should remain upon it, for the specified term of five years, when it should be theirs forever. My object

was simply, as far as the object could be accomplished, to benefit those of the Northern States who were landless, and the thousands of the Southern States, who were willing to toil if they had anything of their own to toil upon. It was to benefit the emigrant, by giving him a home; to let him feel that he had a homestead; that he trod upon his own soil; that he was a man, a freeholder. On his own good behavior he must rely to make up all else to which he would aspire. I might have been wrong in my opinions, but they are my opinions still; and if ever an opportunity is given me, I shall endeavor to carry them out.

Well, gentlemen, I revert once more to your great State. I see all her works, all her gigantic improvements, the respectability of her Government. I hear of her greatness over the whole world. Your merchants have a character everywhere, which realizes the idea of my youth of the character of a British merchant, which I will illustrate by an anecdote. A friend of mine, in the days of the French Republic, had so much confidence in the men who stood at the head of affairs, that he invested largely in Assignats. But after a while he found them to be worthless. His creditors would not touch them; and there they were, dead upon his hands. One day, after using some very extravagant language, he concluded by saying, "that if he were traveling in the deserts of Arabia, and his camel should kick up a British bill of exchange out of the sands, it would be worth ten per cent. premium, while these Government Assignats were not worth a farthing." So your commercial character stands. Your vessels traverse every sea, and fill all the rivers. You call commerce to you, and she comes. You call her from the vasty deep, and she responds to your call.

But, gentlemen, I will conclude by offering a sentiment, for I am sure you are anxious to hear from others, from whom I have too long detained you. Permit me to give

The State of New York: Not the envy, but the admiration of her sister States.

It is needless to say that Mr. Webster was greeted throughout with repeated applause, and resumed his seat amidst long-continued and enthusiastic cheers.

SPEECH AT SYRACUSE.

Fellow-citizens of Syracuse, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you cordially for the pains you have taken to meet together this afternoon, forming so broad an assemblage, to welcome me to your important and growing city of Syracuse.

I have known this place, by occasional visits, for many years; some of those visits were made before you, whose happy faces I see before me, were born, or when you were in infancy. I have watched its progress with interest, connected as it has been with the interest of the great saline product of the State, and as the capital of the noble County of Onondaga, which I have always regarded with admiration.

Ladies and Gentlemen, The President and his friends wereinvited, three weeks ago, to attend the celebration of the completion of that great line of communication, the Erie Railroad. We left Washington with no other purpose, certainly none on my part, than to perform that agreeable duty. I had not the slightest expectation of being here, nor had I the slightest idea, or wish, of being called upon to address you, or any other body of citizens of the United States, upon the political topics of the day.

Ladies and Gentlemen, my time of life for such public discourses and illustrations may be considered as pretty much over. There is a time for all things, and there has been a time when it was not unpleasant to me to meet masses of ladies and gentlemen in the open air, and to speak upon topics which were not disagreeable to them, and certainly not to me. But there must come a time, as we advance in life and age, when what we do for the public must be more in the closet, and less in the field.

Nevertheless, Ladies and Gentlemen, a large number of the people of Syracuse having signified to me, by letter, that it was their desire that I should meet them to-day, and address them on public subjects, as far as may be in my power, I gladly conform to their request.

On the great question of the day, my fellow-citizens, I have no secrets. I have nothing to conceal and nothing to boast of. I trust that all of you know pretty well who I am, and what I am, and what my principles of political conduct have been for the last thirty years. They are not likely to be changed; and it is not likely that any earthly inducement will prevail upon me to depart from those settled notions and opinions which I imbibed in early life, which I have followed in the councils of this country, for good or for evil, for thirty years, and the correctness of which my judgment approves more and more every day of my life.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—I know very well that on the agitating questions of the present day, I have not the happiness to concur with all the people of Syracuse, or the county of Onondaga, or other parts of the State of New York. I know there are varieties of sentiments, and I know the sources of that disagreement. Some of them are very justifiable, and some of them, I am sorry to believe, are not capable of much defence.

But I know there are differences of feeling brought about by differences of association, by different reading, and by different degrees of knowledge and information respecting public affairs.

But, since I am requested to address you, you must take from me the honest sentiments of my own heart, the convictions of my own conscience. I lay no claim to your approval of my views, and I ask no favorable reception of them, "farther than you see the suggestions I make to you, are worthy of your regard." You are here in the centre, the very centre of the greatest State in the Union, the place where frequently assemble representatives of all parties and all views, and you have here all sorts of sentiments advanced, all sorts of doctrines espoused, and you have a very fair opportunity of forming a judgment, a fair, conscientious judgment, of all great questions before the public.

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a matter of notoriety all the world over, and especially in Syracuse, that the origin of the important questions, that for two years have agitated the country, is the condition of the Southern States in respect to the institution of slavery in those States, and the rights of the parties connected with that institution in the Government under which we live.

You cannot state, more strongly than I feel to be true, that this original, ancient, unhappy institution of the slavery of the African races in the Southern States, is forever and ever to be deplored. It has been, in the course of our history, as much deplored by the Southern States as by ourselves, and, to sixty years ago, was more deplored by them than by us.

When the Constitution of the United States was adopted, the Northern people did not feel the evils of slavery, because it was not among them to any great or growing extent. The Southern people did feel the evils, because it was among them; and they all thought, and all said, it was an evil entailed upon them by the British Government, for which they were full of lamentation and regret, and if they knew how to get rid of it, they would embrace any reasonable measure to accomplish that end.

Such were the feelings and such the opinions of the principal men of the South; of such men as Chancellor Wythe, Jefferson, Mason, and other leading men of the South, who were concerned in the formation of the Constitution of the United States. And if you, young men, will look into the history of those times, you will find what I state to be true, that the Southern people were more filled with regret at the existence of slavery than the Northern people were.

The thirteen were colonies originally of English origin, coming here at different times, settling along the coast under various circumstances, all united by a common origin, found themselves oppressed by the mother country in '75, and in '76 they declared their independence. That was an act of Union; it was a united act of the thirteen colonies; it was that united act that made us free from the dominion of England; and, united under that act, the colonies fought the war of the Revolution, and afterwards established a common Government. There was at that time no more idea of prohibiting slavery in the Southern States, than there was of introducing it into the Northern States. These domestic State institutions, and State establishments, were considered as the proper subjects for the legislation of States themselves.

For purposes of general defence and general welfare, and for purposes of commercial equality, and similar objects, the States afterwards agreed

to become one government; and as to all the rest, it was expressly agreed that every State should take care of its own rights, and regulate itself in relation thereto at its own discretion. Upon these principles we came together under the Constitution which was then adopted; and Washington, unanimously chosen by all the people, was our first President.

That was before your day, fellow-citizens, and before mine, but it is a matter of history; and from it you know, that this question of the existence of slavery in the Southern States never became an agitating subject for more than fifty years afterwards. For more than fifty years the Northern States never supposed that they had anything to do with it; but, in process of time, and in the progress of things, public sentiment has changed at the North. There is now a strong and animated, sometimes an enthusiastic, and sometimes a religious feeling, against the existence of slavery in the South. But persons entertaining such feelings and sentiments, as I think, disregard the line of their own duties, and adventure upon fields which are utterly forbidden.

Ladies and Gentlemen, there are in this country Abolition Societies and Abolition Presses; and it is no new thing for me to say, for I said it twenty years ago, and have held the opinion ever since, that, in my opinion, all these things have prejudiced the condition of the slave. Twenty years ago, a convention of the whole people of Virginia was held, to deliberate on changing her Constitution, and there was a free discussion of the policy of liberating the slaves, and of gradual emancipation. The question was freely and openly discussed, and there was no fear, no reserve. I followed, in that respect, the advice of Jefferson, and Madison, and Marshall, with all of whom I have conversed upon this subject, and all of whom desired to see a way in which the gradual emancipation of the slave population of the South might be accomplished. And as I said, twenty years ago that question was freely and openly discussed by Marshall and other persons at the convention called by the people of Virginia. Everybody knew what was going on, and it was perfectly safe to come out and maintain, as a general proposition, that it would be for the benefit of the South to provide for the gradual emancipation of the slaves.

It was about that time that Abolition Societies were established in New England, and, in my opinion, they have done nothing but mischief; they have riveted the chains of every slave in the Southern States; they have made their masters jealous and fearful, and postponed far and far the period of their redemption. This is my judgment; it may not be yours.

Well, what has been the consequence? We have had occasions in which, in our political system, questions have arisen on the extension of slave territory. It arose in the case of Texas, and nobody found me then voting for the addition of one foot of slave territory to the United States. Ah! even before many persons who now shout the loudest for liberty, knew what liberty was, I declared, in the city of New York in 1837, (and it has been on record ever since, and you can all see it,) my fixed purpose, that, under no circumstances, and under the pressure of no exigency, would I agree to take Texas into this country as a slave State, or a slave territory. From that position I have not departed; but our good representatives in the Senate and in the House of Representatives from the State of New York, from the Empire State, voted for the admission of Texas, while I resisted it in vain.

I state it not as a reproach, but as a fact, that some of the gentlemen from New York, then distinguished in the houses of Congress, in spite of all I could say or do, voted to bring Texas, as she was, into the Union, as a slave State, and with the solemn stipulation of the privilege of making out of herself four more slave States.

What are they, and where are they now? They are Free-soilers of the first water, (applause,) and they loudly denounce Mr. Webster. I believe he has been denounced here. Is not this Syracuse? (Great applause and laughter.) I believe they hold conventions here, (laughter;) they denounce Webster as the fit associate of Benedict Arnold; and Prof. Stuart, Dr. Spencer and Dr. Lord, and Dr. Dewey, and others of that stamp, as being no better. (Laughter.) I would be glad to strike out Benedict Arnold; as for the rest, I am proud of their company.

This is the truth; and before the throne of God, and before the tribunal of an intelligent people, there is nothing valuable but *truth*, *truth*, *truth*. It is not glossary or commentary, that is valuable; it is not that thing called eloquence, never of the greatest value, and often mischievous; but it is that which can stand the test of time and eternity alone—*truth*.

Now it is *truth*, that from my earliest introduction into public life, up to the present time, I never voted, I always refused to vote, for the acquisition of one inch of slave territory to the United States. (Great applause.) But that goes for nothing, for nothing.

It is equally true that the Constitution of the United States, in so many words, declares that persons bound to service in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall not be discharged therefrom, but shall be delivered up to the person to whom such service is due.

Now, I have sworn, again and again, to support that Constitution, and so has every person, who has held office under the State Government, as solemnly sworn before God to support that Government; that is, so far as depends upon him, to take care that no fugitive from labor, coming into a free State, be discharged from that labor, but shall be restored.

Well, what are we to do, then, as conscientious persons? How are we to treat this matter? Are we at liberty to say that all this is imagination, all nonsense, and we will do as we please? Shall we say here is no obligation binding on our conscience? You might as well say there are no obligations in domestic relations. Our political duties are equally matters of conscience, as are the duties arising out of our domestic ties and most endearing social relations. That is my opinion.

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would wish that all the human race, of every color, were as happy as we are, and as capable of self-government. So far as men are qualified for self-government; so far as they are happier by being able to take care of themselves, so much the better. But we are to consider what we do, and we are not to rush on under the influence of a false philanthropy and mistaken humanity. If you satisfy me that we can do anything for the benefit of the southern slave, constitutionally, I will do it. I have said, and I say again, I would vote in Congress, were I in that body, to restore to Virginia all the public lands the General Government has had from her, and all the proceeds of the same up to this time, if by that means it would enable her to provide some way for the emancipation of her black population. Can I do more? Can

you do more? And if we cannot do that, can we do more than to leave it to an all-wise Providence to bring about the result?

At the commencement of 1850, a year and a half ago, I was a member of Congress. I had been there a great while, perhaps most of you think quite too long, (laughter,) but there I was. We had acquired these new territories from Mexico, all against my wishes. I voted against each and all of them. California had no attractions for me. I did not wish to bring into this government the agitating question about the further extension of slave territory. Your Senators from New York did wish it, and voted for it, against many votes of Southern gentlemen, who felt as I did, and who wished to avoid the controversy. Such were Berrien and Badger, Southern men. Their constituents wished them to vote for bringing in the new acquisitions, but they saw the evil of it, and they said, *No!* and voted against it. But the Northern States voted for it, very many of them, New York and Rhode Island, and even one-half of Massachusetts.

They said we will try an experiment. Good Heavens! try an experiment to see whether it will dismember the Union! Make an acquisition which may destroy it! Try an experiment upon the nation with as much unconcern as we try an experiment in chemistry! * *

Well, this territory came in. It turned out as I foresaw. I will not say I foresaw the whole; I foresaw a part.

California was settled by a rush of people from the Northern and Middle States, and they made that government free at once. So far so good. She came in as a State, with the star of freedom in her forehead, and I rejoice at it. But no doubt it was a serious disappointment to the Southern people, that some parts of California were not set apart for slave population and slave culture.

What next? There were those two territories of New Mexico and Utah, and a great conflict between the North and the South, whether the Wilmot Proviso should be applied to New Mexico.

I examined that subject; I knew it was distasteful and repugnant to the South; and I asked myself whether any such provision was necessary; whether in the course of human events; whether in the geographical conformation of the country, and the habits of the people, there was the least ground to suppose that New Mexico would ever be a slave country. I thought there was not

I thought that by the law of nature, superior to all the Wilmot Provisos the world ever saw, the mountains of New Mexico must sustain a free population. Therefore I would not consent merely as a taunting reproach, to apply the Wilmot Proviso to the mountains of New Mexico; any more than I would apply it to the Canadas.

Well, *that* is the burden of my offence. But throughout New York and New England, this refusal to apply the Wilmot Proviso, is charged against me as a falsification of all the principles of liberty I have supported all my life.

I made that declaration on the 7th of March, 1850. You know the sound of reproach that rang through the whole country; you know how Webster, who was supposed to be the friend of liberty and of the Constitution, was reviled, everywhere, for his departure from that course.

In forty days from the time I made that speech, and expressed my

opinion that it was not necessary to have a controversy with the South upon that subject, because the law of nature had excluded slavery from New Mexico, the people of New Mexico assembled and formed a constitution which excluded it altogether.

Now, what I have to complain of, I do not mean to complain of anything; but the truth is, that of all the presses in Western New York and New England, that reviled me so much and so violently for affirming there was no necessity for applying the Wilmot Proviso to New Mexico, there is not one of them that has taken back the charge, when they saw the truth of my assertion verified by facts. Did they say Webster was right, and we wrong? No; not one of them.

Now, my fellow-citizens, we come down to the commencement of the year 1850. There was a general agreement, not universal, a general consent, of the majority of Congress to bring in California under her Constitution of freedom. But what was to be done with those two territories?

There was a more vital question. You know Texas accomplished her independence by her revolution against Mexico; and afterwards by her Constitution, as she said, Texas embraced all the country east of the Rio Grande. That was disputed. I do not say Texas was right; but that was her claim. Then we had admitted Texas in '45, without any statement of her boundaries; but taking her, as she represented her own boundaries to be. When she came into the Union, under the law of '45, and when we acquired New Mexico, a question immediately arose as to whom New Mexico, east of the Rio Grande, belonged; whether to the United States or to Texas. This was very much a matter of dispute. Now, who should settle this question? Texas was an extreme Southern State, full of ardent young men, ready for any enterprise for what they considered the support of their rights; who were going to take possession by force of arms, of what they thought were Texas lands. At that time there were six or seven States of the South that had passed resolutions of separation, or leading to separation, or calling conventions to consider the question of separation, and were ready to take up the cause of Texas, and assist in enforcing her rights. Such was the state of things.

I confess, that for one, I thought it a subject of the greatest importance, to settle this question of the Texas boundary by a just compromise; by any fair and equal arrangement, so that the peace of the country might be preserved. Without going more at length into the matter now, I wish to say, that in my opinion, there was great danger of civil war. From the condition of Texas herself, and considering the thousands upon thousands of persons in the Southern States, who were only waiting an opportunity to make an outbreak, and were ready to join the standard of Texas, which would give them the chance for military display; I say there was the greatest danger of civil war.

I know very well, had Texas taken the first step, the Government of the United States would easily have subdued her. As a military matter, it was easy to foresee that result. But then as a political matter, as a matter connected with the view which the statesman should take of it, who can see the result of the shedding of blood by the Government?

I thought, therefore, and think still, that every reasonable sacrifice

that could be made, to settle the boundary of Texas, and to take away the topic of disunion from among us, should be made.

But there remained other matters. I thought there ought to be a proper government for Utah and New Mexico. We have in all such cases, heretofore, established a territorial government. We did establish it, and that was one of the measures of that Congress, and in my opinion a very proper one.

And this leads us to the consideration of the question of the recent enactment of what is called the Fugitive Slave Law. I have said that you and I are not responsible for the existence of slavery in the South, no more than in the Island of Cuba, and we have no more to do with the one than the other. It is as far removed from all your political duties, and my political duties, as the slaves in the West India Islands. Well, here they are, and here is an original compact of the States, that persons, bound to service or labor in one State, escaping into another, shall not be discharged, but be returned.

Now, in General Washington's time, in 1793, Congress passed an act for carrying this part of the Constitution into effect. It was thought wise at the time to leave the execution of that law pretty much in the hands of State tribunals; State magistrates, and officers and judges were authorized to execute that law. It was so administered for fifty years, and nobody complained of it. Things went on until this new excitement of the slavery question, this abolition question, was brought up, and then some of the States, Massachusetts, Ohio and others, enacted laws making it penal to execute this law of Congress.

Then the statute became a dead letter in this part of it; when, of course, it became a matter of necessity to provide for the execution of this Constitutional enactment by the authority of the Government of the United States, or give it up altogether. Well, I made no question myself, that if we meant to fulfill the contract of the statute, if we meant to be honest, it was our duty to make a provision, which, by the authority of the Government itself, should carry into execution the provisions of the Constitution. And that is the origin of the present Fugitive Slave Law.

I do not to say the law is perfect. I proposed some amendments to it, but was called from the Senate before it was adjusted.

The law passed, and I have not yet heard the man whose opinion is worth a sixpence, who has said that that law is not perfectly constitutional. The Judges of the Supreme Court of the United States, of New York, of Massachusetts, all say the law is a constitutional one, passed in perfect conformity to the requirements of the Constitution. What then? Is it not to be obeyed? Are not those who are sworn to obey the Constitution, to enforce that law? Is it not a matter of conscience, of conscience?

But what do we hear? We hear of persons assembling in Massachusetts and New York, who set up themselves over the Constitution, above the law, and above the decisions of the highest tribunals, and who say this law shall not be carried into effect. You have heard it here, have you not? Has it not been so said in the county of Onondaga? (Cries of Yes, yes.) And have they not pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to defeat its execution? Pledged their lives, their

fortunes, and *sacred honor!* for what? For the violation of the law, for the committal of treason to the country; for it is treason, and nothing else. (Great applause.)

I am a lawyer, and I value my reputation as a lawyer more than anything else, and I tell you, if men get together and declare a law of Congress shall not be executed in any case, and assemble in numbers to prevent the execution of such law, they are *traitors*, and are guilty of treason, and bring upon themselves the penalties of the law.

No! no! It is time to put an end to this imposition upon good citizens, good men and good women. It is treason, *treason*, TREASON, and nothing else, (cheers,) and if they do not incur the penalties of treason, it is owing to the clemency of the law's administration, and to no merit of their own.

Who and what are these men? I am assured some of them are clergymen, and some, I am sorry to say it, are lawyers, and who the rest are, God only knows.

They say the law will not be executed. Let them take care, for those are pretty bold assertions. The law must be executed, not only in carrying back the slave, but against those guilty of treasonable practices in resisting its execution.

Depend upon it, the law will be executed in its spirit, and to its letter. (Great applause.) It will be executed in all the great cities; here in Syracuse; in the midst of the next Anti-slavery Convention, if the occasion shall arise; then we shall see what becomes of their lives and their sacred honor. (Tremendous cheering.)

Do not debauch your own understandings, your own judgments; do not render ridiculous your own sympathy, humanity and philanthropy, by any such ideas.

The course of your duty towards all that are in bondage within your power and influence, is plain. Happily the teaching of the sacred book, which is our guide, instructs us in that matter. What we can do, we will do, to let the oppressed go free, to succor the distressed, and to visit the prisoner in affliction. We must do our duty, and we must content ourselves with acting conscientiously in that sphere of life in which we are placed; politicians in their sphere, individuals in their sphere, and all of us under the deep, earnest sense of obligation that our Creator has impressed upon us.

It is not unfrequently said by a class of men to whom I have referred, that the Constitution is born of hell; that it was the work of the devil; and that Washington was a miserable blood-hound, set upon the track of the African slave. How far these words differ from words that have saluted your ears within yonder hall, you will judge.

Men who utter such sentiments are ready at any moment to destroy the charter of all your liberties, of all your happiness, and of all your hope. They are either insane, or fatally bent on mischief.

The question is, therefore, whether we will sustain the government under which we live; whether we will do justice to the Southern States, that they may have no excuse for going out of the Union. If there is anybody that will not consent that the South shall have a fair hearing, a fair trial, a fair decision upon what they think the Constitution secures to them, I am not of that number.

Everybody knows that I am a Northern man, born in the extreme North, bred and brought up in notions altogether irreconcilable to human slavery, and why should I have any sentiments in common with the South on that subject?

But when it is put to me as a public man, whether the people of the South, under the stipulations of this Constitution, have not the right of a fair law from Congress for returning to them the fugitive slave, I say they have; and I could not say otherwise.

Ladies and gentlemen, you will pardon me for the gravity of these remarks. I had rather talk with you in private or public on other subjects; upon the prosperity and happiness we all enjoy; upon the growth of this beautiful portion of New York; and in short upon anything, rather than upon the fugitive slave law, or Texas or New Mexico; but I came here at the solicitation of the people of your city, to speak upon public topics. You will accept my thanks for the kind manner in which you have been pleased to receive me, and I wish you and your families all, life, happiness and prosperity.

MR. WEBSTER'S SPEECH

AT

THE DINNER GIVEN HIM AT SYRACUSE.

B. Davis Noxon, Esq., gave the following toast:

"The Constitution and its greatest Expounder; the Union and its ablest Defender."

Mr. Webster arose, amid great applause, to reply.

I am happy to meet you, and to enjoy this quiet, social and agreeable dinner with you. Mr. Noxon has done me too much honor, to allude to me in the terms which he has chosen, in connecting my services with the Constitution of the country, and the Union.

It has so happened, that all the public services which I have rendered in the world, in my day and generation, have been connected with the General Government. I think I ought to make an exception. I was ten days a member of the Massachusetts Legislature, (laughter,) and I turned my thoughts to the search of some good object in which I could be useful in that position; and, after much reflection, I introduced a bill which, with the general consent of both houses of the Massachusetts Legislature, passed into a law, and is now a law of the State, which enacts that no man in the State shall catch trout in any other manner than with the ordinary hook and line. (Great laughter.) With that exception, I never was connected, for an hour, with any State Government, in my life. I never held office, high or low, under any State Government. Perhaps that was my misfortune.

At the age of thirty, I was in New Hampshire, practising law, and had some clients. John Taylor Gilman, who, for fourteen years, was Governer of the State, thought that, a young man as I was, I might be fit to be an Attorney General of the State of New Hampshire, and he nominated me to the Council; and the Council taking it into their deep consideration, and not happening to be of the same politics of the Governor and myself, voted, three out of five, that I was not competent, and very likely they were right. (Laughter.) So, you see, gentlemen, I never gained promotion in any State Government.

Gentlemen, to be serious, my life has been a life of severe labor in my profession, and all the portion I could spare of that labor, from the support of my family and myself, has been devoted to the consideration of subjects connected with the general history of the country; the Constitution of the country; the confederation out of which the Constitution arose; the history of all the Congresses which have assembled before and since the formation of that Constitution; and, in short, if I have learned anything, or know anything, (and I admit that it is very little,) what I do know, and what I do understand, as far as I understand anything, is the Constitution of the United States, the history of its formation, and the history of its administration under General Washington, and from that time down to this.

I sometimes, gentlemen, draw around me a sort of presentation of characters and persons who composed the first administration of Washington. I like to look back, I like to go back to those original fountains, and draw in their pure waters. There is nothing that strikes my judgment, and my feelings, stronger than to go back to New York in April, '89.

General Washington had been elected President. So uncertain was it, then, what would be the success of the new government, that the 4th of March went by four weeks before there was a quorum of either branch of Congress. And I have seen several original letters, addressed to members of Congress, urging them to come on, to form a government.

Many of the choice spirits, and all the eminent men that he had known through the period of the Revolution, staunch, good, strong men, disciplined, tried in the great school of adversity, were there. There was Hamilton, a marvel, a perfect marvel; young, a man almost self-educated, a man of intuitive genius; for nobody knows when or where he obtained the knowledge which distinguished him at so early a period.

General Washington saw he was fit to be placed at the head of the finances of the government; a great post, which was to decide whether the government could go on or not; because the country was poor, and the Congress of the country was untried. At that time, there was no general flag, no law regulating commerce; and the question was, whether any revenue could be derived from it.

And then there was Gen. Henry Knox, who in September was placed at the head of the War Department, a good soldier. In the same month, Washington placed John Jay at the head of the Judiciary; that gave confidence to the courts of the United States. No man ever ascended the bench of justice with a purer and higher character than John Jay. Afterwards, he sent him on a most important mission to England, and placed in that station Ellsworth, of Connecticut. He invited Jefferson, though not in the country, to become Secretary of State. In short

if one might draw before him now the scene as it existed when Washington was inaugurated, and see his sedate and serene manner, a manner which to some, perhaps, seemed austere; and if we could have him before us this day, and look at him as he sat in his first Cabinet, it would make one of the most striking historical pictures that could be committed to canvas. But we go further back, to '74; '74 is the great era in our history, the time of the meeting of the first Congress in Philadelphia.

And those remarkable papers that distinguished that Congress, and especially that capital paper addressed to England, by John Jay! There we see the great basis of that popular system which our fathers maintained through the Revolution, and which constitutes the basis of the present Constitution of the United States.

Well, they fought through the Revolution; they came out conquerors, and peace took place in '83. Now, allow me to say that there is no more interesting period in our history, than that which ensued between the peace of '83 and the establishment of this Government.

The States were all separate, all poor; none had any commerce. There was the debt of the Revolution unpaid, millions upon millions; and the government then existing could not lay any tax, and could not collect any duties.

Of all periods in our history, if you, young men, will study it, if those who hope to be distinguished in the history of our country hereafter will study it, that portion of our history from the peace of '83 to the establishment of this Government, is fullest of instruction of all others.

Then it was that the ceaseless activity of Hamilton and Madison exhibited itself. They were the two great motive powers, the one north, the other south. Hamilton was ten years the younger, but he was the elder in everything but years, and Madison followed him in matters of the highest moment.

If, gentlemen, you should have occasion to recur to the reports of Congress, in '83, upon the necessity of such a government as could lay uniform duties, and make a uniform commerce, and establish a uniform government, so that there should be the same commerce of Massachusetts and of Virginia, there you will see all the elements laid down.

It is in these pursuits, and in the study of these questions, that I have, perhaps, devoted more of my time than a more strict regard to myself and my family would justify. But I must confess they have been the pursuits of my life.

Then we arrive at the assembly of gentlemen from several of the States, in '86. There were Madison and Hamilton, and a few others, twelve in all, I think, whose object was to bring the States to the same conclusion, that goods imported should pay a uniform duty.

After a session of two weeks, they concluded to recommend the calling of a convention to make a constitution of government for the whole United States. That recommendation was sent to the old Congress, and by them sent to the old States. And in May, 1787, the convention that formed the present Constitution met in Philadelphia.

So the formation of the Constitution went on by slow degrees, and wise and experienced public men came to the conclusion that these States could not be prosperous without a General Government, and that Government founded upon the principle of a Union in things common and gene-

ral to all, and the State's power and authority reserved wherever the general Union, and the purposes of it, did not require an interference.

These things are all historical. It is in the nature of things that men go on from step to step, according to the exigency of the case. They found a Union was necessary, a common commercial system necessary; and all these things were provided for in the Constitution under which we live. If we look at it, we shall see it is a matter of compromise and agreement from first to last. The Northern States were commercial, and what had they to gain? They had to gain a protected commerce abroad, and an exclusive right of the coasting trade, and of the domestic trade of the country, as against foreign influences. The South yielded all that. They agreed to place in Congress the entire control over the commerce of the country, both domestic and foreign. And therefore we all know that the first Congress that ever assembled, placed the entire coasting trade of the country in American hands. Foreign ships could not, after that, trade between Boston and Virginia. And at that day the commerce was mostly New England and New York commerce, and so it has remained to this day. And now it employs a vast tonnage and thousands of ships. And all of it, from Maine to California, is confined to American vessels. No foreigner interferes. They could carry much cheaper and be more useful to Southern consumers; for it is a fact that the vessels of Northern Europe, of Sweden, and the Hanse Towns, navigate the seas cheaper than we can, because they do not pay so much wages to their hands as we do, nor feed them so well.

All this is preserved, and preserved under this Constitution, to the commercial interests of the North. Well, this is the great boon which my country of New England and yours of New York have received from the Government. It has carried their flag all over the world.

Then the Constitution went on to declare other things.

In the first place, it placed the foreign relations of the country in a right position. In the next place, it regulated uniform duties, and that was of the utmost importance. Why? There was the little State of Delaware that had a good port of entry, and Rhode Island which had an admirable port of entry. The State of Rhode Island had the power of assessing duties high or low, as she saw fit, and by underbidding the State of New York and Massachusetts, could support her government, and educate all the children in the State besides, from her revenues. While Rhode Island was out of the General Government, the State could regulate the duties of imports into Newport, and could so underbid the State of Massachusetts, as to raise enough to maintain its whole government. It was, therefore, a great sacrifice to give up what was, in fact, a subsistence, and come in under a general system. But it was done. The North and South all agreed to it. That is what has made New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. Gentlemen, there were compromises on both sides, but of that I have said enough to-day, as regards Southern rights acquired under the Constitution. Then, gentlemen, there is a larger view of this matter, a national view. We were no nation before '89. We had no flag, and there was no power in Europe that would treat with any State, nor had any State any treaty with any foreign power.

It was only when the Constitution of the United States had been adopted; when the Government was organized under it, in the city of New

York, in April, '89; when laws were made, imposing uniform duties in every port; when there was a common flag, a common authority; it was then, and only then, that we became a nation such as we now are. If there is any man more conversant with history than I am, who can find out any records, ancient or modern, who can refer to anything that has occurred since the flood, so illustrative of the power of a great, united government, as our own history has shown, I should be glad to see it. Whether it be poetry, or fiction, or imagination, I defy any man to produce anything equal to it from any source.

And I may say, in consequence of the allusion which has been made to me, that it has been in the study of these topics, of the principles of this Constitution, of the manner of its administration, that I have spent all that part of my life, not now a short one, which I could spare from the severe duties of my profession; and I must say, gentlemen, that I go back every day of my life to the model of Washington's administration. And I say to you here to-night, were I to draw the character of a President, such as Washington, were he on earth, would approve, Washington himself should stand before me, and I would copy his master-strokes and imitate his designs. (Great applause.)

It was a marvel, a perfect marvel, for a man to come up to the civil government from the head of our armies, who possessed so much moderation, so much caution, so much wisdom and firmness, and who at once entered upon the civil administration of the government with so much prudence, and in a manner to give so much satisfaction, and that has left on the whole a character more remarkable and more renowned than any other public man ever possessed. (Applause.)

Thus it has happened, we have had great models. In the course of succeeding times we may have great models. We have sometimes thought that this administration, or that, has gone wrong, but they all at length have worked into the same line, and we are now, after the lapse of more than sixty years, in the possession of the same Constitution, adequate to the accomplishment of all good purposes; and I think, if we have the good sense and forbearance to keep together, there is nothing we may not expect to attain to. We have had dangers, but they have been overcome; and I flatter myself that we shall remember that our forefathers fought together, and achieved our liberties together, established this government together, that it was their united wisdom that gave the first impulse to the laws setting the government in motion.

We have prospered under it, and have gloried under it, and it has raised our name, and fame, and character (I would not boast) higher than that of any nation upon the earth. (Prolonged cheers.) I say it in the fullness of my conviction, there is not a name given under Heaven, which touches in so thrilling a manner the races of millions of the civilized people of the world, as the American nation, the country of Washington. I hope to live to a good old age; I hope to see nothing that will mar that name; but if it be the pleasure of God in his all-wise Providence to cast a cloud over that prospect; if it be in the future that this country, this glorious nation, this renowned government shall fall to pieces, thankful to Him for the life that I have lived, I shall be more thankful if he shall take me to himself before I see such a state of things. (Great applause.)

MR. SPENCER'S SPEECH

AT THE

DINNER GIVEN TO MR. WEBSTER AT ALBANY.

Mr. Spencer rose and addressed the company as follows :—

I am about to offer a sentiment, my friends, which you expect from the chair. The presence of the distinguished guest whom we have met to honor, imposes restraints which may not be overleaped. Within those limits, and without offending the generous spirit which has on this occasion discarded all political and partisan feeling, I may recall to our recollections a few incidents in his public life, which have won for him the proud title of "Defender of the Constitution." (Great applause.)

When in 1832–33, South Carolina raised her parricidal arm against our common mother, and the administration of the government was in the hands of that man of determined purpose and iron will, Andrew Jackson, whose greatest glory was his inflexible resolution to sustain the Union or perish with it, (here the speaker was interrupted by deafening shouts of applause,) in that dark and gloomy day, where was our guest found? Did he think of paltry politics, of how much his party might gain by leaving their antagonists to fight the battle of the Union between themselves, and thus become a prey to their watchful opponents? No, gentlemen, you know what he did. He rallied his mighty energies, and tendered them openly and heartily to a political chieftain whose administration he had constantly opposed. (Cheers upon cheers.) He breasted himself to the storm. Where blows were thickest and heaviest, there was he; and when he encountered the great champion of the South, Colonel Hayne, in that immortal, intellectual struggle, the parallel of which no country has witnessed, the hopes, the breathless anxiety of a nation, hung upon his efforts; and, oh, what a shout of joy and gratulation ascended to heaven, at the matchless victory which he achieved. (Here, for some time, the speaker was unable to proceed, in consequence of the incessant and tumultuous cheering of the company, who had spontaneously risen from their seats.) Had he then been called to his fathers, the measure of his fame would have been full to overflowing, and he would have left a monument in the grateful recollection of his countrymen, such as no statesman of modern times has reared. (Renewed applause.) But he was reserved by a kind Providence for greater efforts. For more than twenty years, in the Senate Chamber, in the courts of justice, and in the executive councils, he has stood sentinel over the Constitution. It seems to have been the master passion of his life to love, to venerate, to defend, to fight for the Constitution, at all times and in all places. (Cheers upon cheers.) He did so because the Union existed and can exist only in the Constitution; and the peace and happiness of the country can exist only in the Union. In fighting for the Constitution, he fought therefore for the country, for the whole country.

I may not speak in detail of the many acts of his public life which have developed this absorbing love of country. But there are a few of the pre-

cious gems in the circlet which adorns his brow, that are so marked and prominent that they cannot be overlooked.

When he first assumed the duties of the Department of State, war was lowering in our horizon like a black cloud, ready to launch its thunderbolts around us. The alarming state of our foreign relations, at that time, is shown by the extraordinary fact that the appropriation bills passed by Congress at the close of Mr. Van Buren's administration contained an unusual provision, authorizing the President to transfer them to military purposes. In a few months after our guest took the matter in hand, the celebrated treaty with Lord Ashburton was concluded, by which the irritating question of boundary was settled, every difficulty then known or anticipated was adjusted, and among others, the detestable claim to search our vessels for British seamen, was renounced.

In connection with this treaty, I take this occasion, the first that has presented itself, to state some facts which are not generally known. The then administration had no strength in Congress; it could command no support for any of its measures. This was an obstacle sufficiently formidable in itself. But Mr. Webster had to deal with a feeble and wayward President, an unfriendly Senate, a hostile House of Representatives, and an accomplished British diplomatist. I speak of what I personally know, when I say, that never was a negotiation environed with greater or more perplexing difficulties. He had at least three parties to negotiate with instead of one, to say nothing of Massachusetts and Maine, who had to be consulted in relation to a boundary that affected their territory. You know the result; glorious as it was to our country, how glorious was it also to the pilot that guided the ship through such difficulties! (Prolonged cheering.)

You have not forgotten how the generous sympathies of our guest were awakened in behalf of the noble Hungarians, in their immortal resistance against the force of barbarism. And sure I am there is not a heart here that has not treasured up the contents of that world-renowned letter to Chevalier Hulsemann, in answer to the intimations of threats by Austria to treat our diplomatic agent as a spy! What American was not proud of being the countryman of the author of that letter? (Cheers upon cheers silenced the speaker for some time.)

I confess I cannot now think of that letter, without recollecting the sensations a particular part of it produced upon my risible faculties. I mean the comparison between the territories and national importance of the House of Hapsburgh and those of the United States of America. (A universal shout of merriment here interrupted the speaker again and again, and prevented him from proceeding for some time.)

But I must stop the enumeration of the great deeds in the glory of which we all participate, and by the results of which the whole civilized world has been benefited. I must stop, or the setting sun would leave me still at the task, and the rising sun would find it unfinished.

The same soul-absorbing devotion to the country and to the Constitution, as its anchor of safety, has been exhibited so recently and so remarkably, that no one can have forgotten it. In the view which I present of the matter, it is quite immaterial whether we regard our guest as having been right or wrong. He deemed the course he took to be the only one permitted to him by his sense of duty. On the other side were the strong feelings with which, as a Northern man, he had always sympathized; there also were

the friends of his youth and of his age; the troops of ardent and devoted admirers; all whose love was equal to their reverence; all the associations and affections of life were clustered there; while on the other side a feeling of enmity, engendered by former contests and the defeat of all their schemes, nothing to allure or invite, but everything to repel, except one, and that was the Constitution of the country; that, as he conscientiously believed, required him to interpose and prevent a breach of faith, as well as of the organic law, and avert a civil war that he believed was impending. He hesitated not a moment, but at once marched up to the deadly breach, and was ready to sacrifice upon his country's altar, more than life, everything that could render life worth retaining.

My friends, whatever other view may be taken of that step, every one knows that it conformed to the whole plan of his public life to know no North, no South, when the Constitution was in question; and there is not a heart in this assembly that will not respond to my voice when I pronounce it heroism; heroism of the most sublime order. It can be compared only to that of the Great Reformer who, when advised not to proceed to the Diet that was convoked to condemn him, declared that if fifty thousand legions of devils stood in the way, go he would! (Prolonged and universal shouts.)

How poor and insignificant are all our efforts to express our appreciation of such a character and of such services. They have sunk deep in our hearts; they will sink deeper still in the hearts of the unborn millions who are to people this vast continent, and when he and we sleep with our fathers, his name will reverberate from the Atlantic to the Pacific as the defender of the Constitution and of his country.

Gentlemen, I give you a sentiment which I think will be drank in bumpers and standing. (The whole assembly rose at once with acclamation:)

"The Constitution of the United States, and Daniel Webster, inseparable now, and inseparable in the records of time and eternity."

MR. WEBSTER'S RESPONSE.

Fellow-Citizens, I owe the honor of this occasion, and I esteem it an uncommon and extraordinary honor, to the young men of this city of Albany; and it is my first duty to express to these young men my grateful thanks for the respect they have manifested towards me. Nevertheless, nevertheless, young men of Albany, I do not mistake you, or your object, or your purpose. I am proud to take to myself whatever may properly belong to me, as a token of personal and political regard from you to me. But I know, young men of Albany, it is not I, but the cause; it is not I, but your own generous attachments to your country; it is not I, but the Constitution of the Union, which has bound together your ancestors and mine, and all of us, for more than half a century. It is this, that has brought you here to-day, to testify your regard toward one who, to the best of his humble ability, has sustained that cause before the country. (Cheers.) Go on, young men of Albany! Go on, young men of the United States! Early manhood is the chief prop and support, the reli-

ance and hope, for the preservation of public liberty and the institutions of the land. Early manhood is ingenuous, generous, just. It looks forward to a long life of honor or dishonor; and it means, by the blessing of God, that it shall be a life of honor, of usefulness, and success, in all the professions and pursuits of life; and that it shall close, when close it must, with some claim to the gratitude of the country. Go on, then; uphold the institutions to which you were born. You are manly, fearless, bold. You fear nothing but to do wrong, dread nothing but to be found recreant to patriotism and to your country.

Gentlemen, I certainly had no expectation of appearing in such an assemblage as this to-day. It is not probable, that for a long time to come I may again address any large assemblage of my fellow-citizens. If I should not, and if this were the last, or to be among the last of all the occasions in which I am to appear before any great number of the people of the country, I shall not regret that that appearance was here. I find myself in the political capital of the greatest, most commercial, most powerful State of the Union. I find myself invited to be here by persons of the highest respectability, without distinction of party. I consider the occasion as somewhat august. I know that among those who now listen to me there are such as are of the wisest, the best, the most patriotic and the most experienced public and private men in the State of New York. Here are governors and ex-governors, here are judges and ex-judges, of high character and high station; and here are persons from all the walks of professional and private life, distinguished for talent, and virtue, and eminence. Fellow-citizens, before such an assemblage, and on such an invitation, I feel bound to guard every opinion and every expression; to speak with precision such sentiments as I advance, and to be careful in all that I say, that I may not be misapprehended or misrepresented. I am requested, fellow-citizens, by those who invited me, to signify my sentiments on the state of public affairs in this country, and the interesting questions which are before us.

This proves, gentlemen, that in their opinion there are questions sometimes arising which range above all party, and all the influences, and considerations, and interests of party. It proves more; it proves that, in their judgment, this is a time in which public affairs do rise in importance above the range of party, and draw to them an interest paramount to all party considerations. If that be not so, I am here without object, and you are listening to me for no purpose whatever.

Then, gentlemen, what is the condition of public affairs which makes it necessary and proper for men to meet, and confer together on the state of the country? What are the questions which are overriding, subduing, and overwhelming party, uniting honest, well-meaning persons to lay party aside, to meet and confer for the general public weal? I shall, of course, fellow-citizens, not enter at large into many of these questions, nor into any lengthened discussion of the state of public affairs, but shall endeavor to state what that condition is, what these questions are, and to pronounce a conscientious judgment of my own upon the whole.

The last Congress, fellow-citizens, passed laws called adjustment measures, or settlement measures; laws intended to put an end to certain internal and domestic controversies which existed in the country, and some of them for a long time. These laws were passed by the constitutional

majorities of both houses of Congress. They received the constitutional approbation of the President. They are the laws of the land. To some, or all of them, indeed to all of them, at the time of their passage, there existed warm and violent opposition. None of them passed without heated discussion. Government was established in each of the territories of New Mexico and Utah, but not without opposition. The boundary of Texas was to be settled by compromise with that State, but not without determined and violent opposition. These laws all passed, and as they have now become, from the nature of the case irrepealable, it is not necessary that I should detain you by discussing their merits and demerits. Nevertheless, gentlemen, I desire on this and on all public occasions, in the most emphatic and clear manner to declare, that I hold some of these laws, and especially that which provided for the adjustment of the controversy with Texas, to have been essential to the preservation of the public peace.

I will not now argue that point, nor lay before you at large the circumstances which existed at that time; the peculiar situation of things in so many of the Southern States, or the fact that many of those States, had adopted measures for the separation of the Union; the fact that Texas was preparing to assert her rights to territory which New Mexico thought was hers by right, and that hundreds and thousands of men, tired of the ordinary pursuits of private life, were ready to rise and unite in any enterprise that might open itself to them, even at the risk of a direct conflict with the authority of this Government. I say, therefore, without going into the argument with any details, that in March of 1850, when I found it my duty to address Congress on these important topics, it was my conscientious belief, still unshaken, ever since confirmed, that if the controversy with Texas could not be amicably adjusted, there must, in all probability, have been civil war and civil bloodshed; and in the contemplation of such a prospect it was of little consequence on which standard victory should perch; although in such a contest we took it for granted that no opposition could arise to the authority of the United States that would not be suppressed. But what of that? I was not anxious about the military consequences of things; I looked to the civil and political state of things and their results, and I inquired what would be the condition of the country if, in this agitated state of things, if, in this vastly extended, though not generally pervading feeling at the South, war should break out, and bloodshed should ensue in that extreme of the Union? That was enough for me to inquire into and regard; and if the chances had been but one in a thousand that such would have been the result, I should still have felt that that one thousandth chance should be guarded against by any reasonable sacrifice; because, gentlemen, sanguine as I am for the future prosperity of the country; strongly as I believe now, after what has passed, and especially after those measures to which I have referred, that it is likely to hold together, I yet believe firmly that this Union, once broken, is utterly incapable, according to all human experience, of being re-constructed in its original character, of being re-cemented by any chemistry, or art, or effort, or skill of man. Now, gentlemen, let us pass from those measures which are now accomplished and settled. California is in the Union and cannot be got out; the Texas boundary is settled, and cannot be disturbed; Utah and New Mexico are territories, under provision of law, according to accustomed

usage in former cases, and these things may be regarded as settled. But then there was another subject, equally agitating and equally irritating, which, in its nature, must always be subject to consideration or proposed amendment, and that is the fugitive slave law of 1850, passed at the same session of Congress.

Allow me to advert, very shortly, to what I consider the ground of that law. You know, and I know, that it was very much opposed in the Northern States; sometimes with argument not unfair, often by mere ebullition of party, and often by those whirlwinds of fanaticism that raise a dust and blind the eyes, but produce nothing else. Now, gentlemen, this question of the propriety of the fugitive slave law, or the enactment of some such law, is a question that must be met. Its enemies will not let it sleep or slumber. They will "give neither sleep to their eyes nor slumber to their eyelids" so long as they can agitate it before the people. It is with them a topic, a desirable topic, and all know who have much experience in political affairs, that for party men, and in party times there is hardly anything so desirable as a topic. (Laughter.) Now, gentlemen, I am ready to meet this question. I am ready to meet it; I am ready to say that it was right, proper, expedient, just, that a suitable law should be passed for the restoration of the fugitive slaves, found in free States, to their owners in the slave States. I am ready to say that, because I only repeat the words of the Constitution itself, and I am not afraid of being considered a plagiarist, nor a feeble imitator of other men's language and sentiments, when I repeat and announce to every part of the country, to you, here, and at all times, the language of the Constitution of my country. (Loud cheers.) Gentlemen, before the Revolution, slavery existed in the Southern States, and had existed there for more than a hundred years. We of the North were not guilty of its introduction. That generation of men, even in the South, were not guilty of it. It had been introduced according to the policy of the mother country, before there was any independence in the United States; indeed, before there were any authorities in the colonies competent to resist it. Why, gentlemen, men's opinions have so changed on this subject, and properly, the world has come to so much juster sentiments, we can hardly believe, that which is certainly true, that at the peace of Aix la Chapelle, in 1748, the English Government insisted on the fulfillment, to its full extent, of a condition in the treaty of the Assiento, signed at Utrecht, in 1713, by which the Spanish Government had granted the unqualified and exclusive privilege to the British Government of importing slaves into the Spanish colonies in America! That was not then repugnant to public sentiment; happily it would be now.

I allude to it to show, that the introduction of slavery into the Southern States is not to be visited upon the generation that achieved the Independence of this country. On the contrary, all the eminent men of that day regretted it. And you, my young friends of Albany, if you will take the pains to go back to the debates of the period, from the meeting of the first Congress in 1774, I mean the Congress of the Confederation, to the adoption of the present Constitution, and the enactment of the first law under the existing Constitution, you and anybody who will make that necessary research, will find that Southern men and Southern States, as represented in Congress, lamented the existence of slavery in far more earnest

nest and emphatic terms than the Northern; for though it did exist in the Northern States, it was a feeble taper, just going out, soon to end, and nothing was feared from it; while leading men of the South, of Virginia and the Carolinas, felt and acknowledged that it was a moral and political evil; that it weakened the arm of the freeman, and kept back the progress and success of free labor; and they said with truth, and all history verifies the observation, "that if the shores of the Chesapeake had been made as free to free labor as the shores of the North River, New York might have been great, but Virginia would have been great also." That was the sentiment.

Now, under this state of things, gentlemen, when the Constitution was framed, its framers, and the people who adopted it, came to a clear, express, unquestionable stipulation and compact. There had been an ancient practice for many years, for a century, for aught I know, according to which fugitives from service, whether apprentices at the North, or slaves at the South, should be restored. Massachusetts had restored fugitive slaves to Virginia long before the adoption of the Constitution; and it is well known that in other States, in which slavery did or did not exist, they were restored also, on proper application. And it was held that any man could pursue his slave and take him wherever he could find him. Under this state of things, it was expressly stipulated, in the plainest language, and there it stands; sophistry cannot gloss it, it cannot be erased from the page of the Constitution; there it stands, that persons held to service or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall not, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up, upon claim of the party to whom such service or labor shall be due. This was adopted without dissent, nowhere objected to, North or South, but considered as a matter of absolute right and justice to the Southern States, concurred in everywhere, by every State that adopted the Constitution; and we look in vain for any opposition, from Massachusetts to Georgia.

Then, this being the case, this being the provision of the Constitution, it was found necessary, in General Washington's time, to pass a law to carry that provision of the Constitution into effect. Such a law was prepared and passed. It was prepared by a gentleman from a Northern State. It is said to have been drawn up by Mr. Cabot, of Massachusetts. It was supported by him, and by Mr. Goodhue, and by Mr. Sedgwick, of Massachusetts, and generally by all the free States. There was hardly a tenth of all the votes against it, if I rightly remember. It went into operation, and, for a time, it satisfied the just rights and expectations of everybody. That law provided that its enactments should be carried into effect mainly by State magistrates, justices of the peace, judges of State courts, sheriffs and other organs of State authority. So things went on without loud complaints from any quarter, until some fifteen years ago, when some of the States, the free States, thought it proper for them to pass laws prohibiting their own magistrates and officers from executing this law of Congress, under heavy penalties, and refusing to the United States' authorities the use of their prisons for the detention of persons arrested as fugitive slaves. That is to say, these States passed acts defeating the law of Congress, as far as was in their power to defeat it. Those of them to which I refer, not all, but several, nullified the law of '93 entirely. They said, "We will not execute it. No run-

away slave shall be restored." Thus the law became a dead letter, an entire dead letter. But here was the constitutional compact, nevertheless, still binding; here was the stipulation, as solemn as words could form it, and which every member of Congress, every officer of the General Government, every officer of the State Governments, from governors down to constables, are sworn to support. Well, under this state of things, in 1850, I was of opinion that common justice and good faith called upon us to make a law, fair, reasonable, equitable, just, that should be calculated to carry this constitutional provision into effect, and give the Southern States what they were entitled to, and what it was intended originally they should receive, that is, a fair right and reasonable means to recover their fugitives from service from the States into which they had fled. I was of opinion that it was the bounden duty of Congress to pass such a law. The South insisted that they had a right to it, and I thought they properly so insisted. It was no concession, no yielding of anything, no giving up of anything. When called on to fulfil a compact, the question is, will you fulfil it? And, for one, I was ready. I said, 'I will fulfil it by any fair and reasonable act of legislation.' Now, the law of 1850, had two objects, both of which were accomplished: First, it was to make the law more favorable for the fugitive than the law of 1793. It did so, because it called for a record, under seal, from a court in the State from which the fugitive came, proving and ascertaining that he was a fugitive, so that nothing should be left, when pursued into a free State, but to produce the proof of his identity. Next, it secured a higher tribunal, and it placed the power in more responsible hands. The judges of the Supreme and District Courts of the United States, and learned persons appointed by them as commissioners, were to see to the execution of the law. Therefore it was a more favorable law, in all respects, to the fugitive, than the law passed under General Washington's administration in '93. And the second object was, to carry the constitutional provision into effect, by the authority of law, seeing that the States had prevented the execution of the former law.

Now, let me say that this law has been discussed, considered, and adjudged in a great many of the tribunals of the country. It has been the subject of discussion before judges of the Supreme Court of the United States, the subject of discussion before courts the most respectable in the States. Everywhere, on all occasions, and by all judges, it has been holden to be, and pronounced to be, a constitutional law. So say Judges McLean, Nelson, Woodbury, and all the rest of the judges, as far as I know, on the bench of the Supreme Court of the United States. So says the unanimous opinion of Massachusetts herself, expressed by as good a court as ever sat in Massachusetts, its present Supreme Court, unanimously, and without hesitation. And so says everybody, eminent for learning, and constitutional law, and good judgment, without opposition, without intermixture of dissent, or difference of judicial opinion anywhere. And I hope I may be indulged on this occasion, gentlemen, partly on account of a high personal regard, and partly for the excellence and ability of the production, to refer you all to a recent very short opinion of Mr. Prentiss, the District Judge of Vermont. (Applause.) True, the case before him did not turn so much on the question of the constitutionality of this law, as upon the unconstitutionality and illegality, and utter inadmissibility, of the notion

of private men and political bodies setting up their own whims, or their own opinions, above it, on the idea of the higher law that exists somewhere between us and the third heaven, I never knew exactly where. (Cries of "good," and laughter.)

All judicial opinions are in favor of this law. You cannot find a man in the profession in New York, whose income reaches thirty pounds a year, who will stake his professional reputation on an opinion against it. If he does, his reputation is not worth the thirty pounds. (Renewed laughter.) And yet this law is opposed, violently opposed, not by bringing this question into court: these lovers of human liberty; these friends of the slave, the fugitive slave, do not put their hands in their pockets and draw funds to conduct law suits, and try the question; they are not in that habit much. (Laughter.) That is not the way they show their devotion to liberty of any kind. But they meet and pass resolutions; they resolve that the law is oppressive, unjust, and should not be executed at any rate, or under any circumstances. It has been said in the States of New York, Massachusetts, and Ohio, over and over again, that the law shall not be executed. That was the language of a Convention in Worcester, in Massachusetts; in Syracuse, New York, and elsewhere. And for this they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor! (Laughter.) Now, gentlemen, these proceedings, I say it upon my professional reputation, are distinctly treasonable. Resolutions passed in Ohio, certain resolutions in New York, and in the conventions held in Boston, are distinctly treasonable. And the act of taking away Shadrach from the public authorities in Boston, and sending him off, was an act of clear treason. I speak this in the hearing of men who are lawyers; I speak it out to the country; I say it everywhere, on my professional reputation. It was treason, and nothing less; that is to say, if men get together, and combine together, and resolve that they will oppose a law of the government, not in any one case, but in all cases; I say if they resolve to resist the law, whoever may be attempted to be made the subject of it, and carry that purpose into effect, by resisting the application of the law in any one case, either by force of arms or force of numbers, that, sir, is treason. (Turning to Mr. Spencer, and stamping with emphasis.) You know it well. (Continuing to address Mr. Spencer. The resolution itself, unacted on, is not treason; it only manifests a treasonable purpose. When this purpose is proclaimed—and it is proclaimed that it will be carried out in all cases—and is carried into effect, by force of arms or numbers, in any one case, that constitutes a case of levying war against the Union, and if it were necessary, I might cite, in illustration, the case of John Fries, convicted in Washington's time, for being concerned in the whiskey insurrection in Pennsylvania. Now, various are the arguments, and various the efforts, to denounce this law; to oppose its execution; to keep it up as a question of agitation and popular excitement; and they are as diverse as the varied ingenuity of man, and the aspect of such questions when they come before the public. And a common thing it is to say that the law is odious; that therefore it cannot be executed, and will not be executed. That has always been said by those who do not mean it shall be executed; not by anybody else. They assume the fact, that it cannot be executed, to make that true which they wish shall turn out to be true. They wish that it

shall not be executed, and, therefore, announce to all mankind that it cannot be executed.

When public men, and the conductors of newspapers of influence and authority, thus deal with the subject, they deal unfairly with it. Those who have types at command, have a perfect right to express their opinions; but I doubt their right to express opinions, as facts. I doubt whether they have a right to say, not as a matter of opinion, but of fact, that this particular law is so odious, here and elsewhere, that it cannot be executed. That only proves that they are of opinion that it ought not, that they hope it may not, be executed. They do not say, "See if any wrong is inflicted on anybody by it, before we wage war upon it; let us hope to find in its operation no wrong or injury to anybody. Let us give it a fair experiment." Do any of them hold that language? Not one. "The wish is father to the thought." They wish that it may not be executed, and therefore they say it cannot and will not be executed. That is one of the modes of presenting the case to the people; and, in my opinion, it is not quite a fair mode of doing it. There are other forms and modes; and I might omit to notice the blustering Abolition societies of Boston and elsewhere, as unworthy of regard; but there are other forms more insidious, and equally efficacious. There are men who say, when you talk of amending that law, that they hope it will not be touched. You talk of attempting it, and they dissuade you. They say, "Let it remain as obnoxious as it can be, and so much the sooner it will disgust, and be detested by, the whole community."

I am grieved to say that such sentiments have been avowed by those in Massachusetts who ought to be utterly ashamed, utterly ashamed, to utter such opinions. For, what do they mean? They mean to make the law obnoxious; so obnoxious that it shall not be executed. But still they suggest no other law; they oppose all amendment; oppose doing anything that shall make it less distasteful. What do they mean? They mean, and they know it, that there shall exist no law whatever for carrying into effect this provision of the Constitution of the country, if they can prevent it, let the consequences be what they may. They wish to strike out this constitutional provision; to annul it. They oppose it in every possible form short of personal resistance, or incurring personal danger; and to do this, they say the worse the law is the better. They say we have now a topic, and for mercy's sake don't amend the horrible law of 1850. (Laughter.) Then, again, they say, "We are for an eternal agitation and discussion of this question; the people cannot be bound by it. Every member of Congress has the right to move the repeal of this as well as any other law." Who does not know this, gentlemen? A member must act according to his own discretion. No doubt he has a right to-morrow, if Congress were in session, to move a repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law; but this takes with it another fact.

He has just as much right to move to tear down the Capitol, until one stone shall not be left on another; just as much right to move to disband the army, and to throw the ordnance and arms into the sea. He has just as much right to move that all the ships of war of the United States shall be collected and burned; an illumination like that which lit up the walls of ancient Troy. He may move to do any of these things. The question is, Is he prudent, wise; a real friend of the country, or adverse to it? That is all.

And a greater question lies behind: Will the people support him in it? Is it the result of the good sense of the Northern people, that the question shall have neither rest nor quiet, but shall be constantly kept up as a topic of agitation? I cannot decide this question for the people, but leave them to decide it for themselves. And now, gentlemen, this is a serious question, whether the Constitution can be maintained in part and not in whole? Whether those interested in the preservation of one part of it, finding their interests in that particular abandoned, are not likely enough, according to all experience of human feeling and human conduct, to discard that portion which was introduced, not for their benefit, but for the benefit of others? That is the question. For one, I confess, I do not see any reasonable prospect of maintaining the Constitution of the United States, unless we maintain it as a whole; impartially, honorably, patriotically. Gentlemen, I am detaining you too long; but allow me a few words on another subject, by way of illustration.

The Constitution of the United States consists in a series of mutual agreements or compromises, one thing being yielded by the South, another by the North; the general mind having been brought together, and the whole agreed to, as I have said, as a series of compromises constituting one whole. Well, gentlemen, who does not see that? Had the North no particular interest to be regarded and protected? Had the North no peculiar interest of its own? Was nothing yielded by the South to the North? Gentlemen, you are proud citizens of a great commercial State. You know that New York ships float over the whole world, and bring abundance of riches to your own shores. You know that this is the result of the commercial policy of the United States, and of the commercial power vested in Congress by the Constitution. And how was this commerce established? by what constitutional provisions, and for whose benefit? The South was never a commercial country. The plantation States were never commercial. Their interest always was, as they thought, what they think it to be now, free trade, the unrestricted admission of foreigners in competition in all branches of business with our own people. But what did they do? They agreed to form a Government that should regulate commerce according to the wants and wishes of the Northern States, and when the Constitution went into operation, a commercial system was actually established, on which has risen up the whole glory of New York and New England. (Applause.)

Well, what did Congress do under a Northern lead with Southern acquiescence? What did it do? It protected the commerce of New-York and the Eastern States, first, by a preference, by way of tonnage duties, and that higher tonnage on foreign ships has never been surrendered to this day, but in consideration of a just equivalent; so in that respect, without grudging or complaint on the part of the South, but generously and fairly, not by way of concession, but in the true spirit of the Constitution, the commerce of New York was, and the New England States were, protected by the provision of the Constitution to which I have referred. But that is not all.

Friends! Fellow-citizens! Men of New York! Does this country not now extend from Maine to Mexico, and beyond? and have we not a State beyond Cape Horn, belonging nevertheless to us as part of our commercial system? And what does New York enjoy? What do Massa-

chusetts and Maine enjoy? They enjoy an exclusive right of carrying on the coasting trade from State to State, on the Atlantic and around Cape Horn to the Pacific. And that is a most highly important branch of business, and source of wealth and emolument, of comfort and good living. Every man must know this, who is not blinded by passion or fanaticism. It is this exclusive right to the coasting trade which the Northern States possess, which was granted to them, which they have ever held, and which, up to this day, there has been no attempt to rescue from them; it is this which has employed so much tonnage and so many men, and given support to so many thousands of our fellow-citizens. Now, what would you say in this day of the prevalence of notions of free trade; what would you say, if the South and the West were to join together to repeal this law? And they have the votes to do it to-morrow. What would you say if they should join hands and say that these men of the North and New England, who put this slight on our interests, shall enjoy this exclusive privilege no longer? That they will throw it all open, and invite the Dane, the Swede, the Hamburger, and all the commercial nations of Europe who can carry cheaper, to come in and carry goods from New York coastwise on the Atlantic, and to California on the Pacific? What do you say to that?

Now, gentlemen, these ideas have been a thousand times suggested, perhaps, but if there is anything new in them, I hope it may be regarded. But what was said in Syracuse and Boston; it was this: "You set up profit against conscience; you set up the means of living; we go for conscience." (Laughter.) That is a flight of fanaticism. All I have to answer is, that if what we propose is right, fair, just, and stands well with a conscience not enlightened with those high flights of fancy, it is none the worse for being profitable; and that it does not make a thing bad which is good in itself, that you and I can live on it, and our children be supported and educated by it. If the compact of the Constitution is fair, and was fairly entered into, it is none the worse one should think, for its having been found useful. (Renewed applause.) Gentlemen, I believe, in Cromwell's time—for I am not very fresh in my recollections of that historic period; I have had more to do with other things than some of you younger men that love to look into the instructive history of that age, but I think it was in Cromwell's time, that there sprang up a race of saints who called themselves "fifth monarchy men;" and a happy, felicitous, glorious people they were; for they had practised so many virtues, they were so enlightened, so perfect, that they got to be, in the language of that day, "above ordinances." That is the higher law of this day exactly. (Laughter.) Our higher law is but the old doctrine of the fifth monarchy men, of Cromwell's time, revived. They were above ordinances, walked about firm and spruce, self-satisfied, thankful to God that they were not as other men, but had attained so far to salvation as to be "above all necessity of restraint or control, civil or religious." (Renewed laughter.)

Gentlemen, we live under a Constitution. It has made us what we are. What has carried the American flag all over the world? What has constituted that unit of commerce, that wherever the stars and stripes are seen, they signify that it is America and united America? What is it now that represents us so respectably all over Europe? in London at this moment, and all over the world? What is it but the result of those com-

mercial regulations which united us all together, and made our commerce, the same commerce ; which made all the States, New York, Massachusetts, South Carolina, in the aspect of our foreign relations, the same country, without division, distinction, or separation? Now, gentlemen, this was the original design of the Constitution. We, in our day, must see to it, and it will be equally incumbent on you, my young friends of Albany, to see that while you live this spirit is made to pervade the whole administration of the Government: the Constitution of the United States to keep us united, to keep flowing in our hearts a fraternal feeling, must be administered in the spirit in which it was framed. And if I were to exhibit the spirit of the Constitution in its living, speaking, animated form, I would refer always, always, to the administration of the first President, George Washington. (Vehement cheering.) And if I were now to describe a patriot President, I would draw his master-strokes and copy his design ; I would present his picture before me as a constant study ; I would present his policy, alike liberal, just, narrowed down to no sectional interests, bound to no personal objects, held to no locality, but broad, and generous, and open, as expansive as the air which is wafted by the winds of heaven from one part of the country to another. (Cheers.)

I would draw a picture of his foreign policy, just, steady, stately, but withal proud, and lofty, and glorious. No man could say in his day that the broad escutcheon of the honor of the Union could receive injury or damage, or even contumely or disrespect, with impunity. His own character gave character to the foreign relations of the country. He upheld every interest of the United States in even the proudest nations of Europe, and while resolutely just, he was resolutely determined that no plume in the honor of the country should ever be defaced or taken from its proper position by any power on earth. Washington was cautious and prudent ; no self-seeker ; giving information to Congress according to the Constitution, on all questions, when necessary, with fairness and frankness, claiming nothing for himself, exercising his own rights, and preserving the dignity of his station, but taking especial care to execute the laws as a paramount duty, and in such manner as to give satisfaction to all just and reasonable men. And it was always remarked of his administration, that he filled the courts of justice with the most spotless integrity, the highest talent, and the purest virtue ; and hence it became a common saying, running through all classes of society, that our great security is in the learning and integrity of the judicial tribunals. This high character they justly possessed, and continue to possess in an eminent degree from the impress which Washington stamped on these tribunals at their first organization.

Gentlemen, a patriot President of the United States is the guardian, the protector, the friend of every citizen in them. He should be, and he is, no man's persecutor, no man's enemy, but the supporter and the protector of all and every citizen, so far as such support and protection depend on his faithful execution of the laws. But there is especially one great idea which Washington presents, and which governed him, and which should govern every man in high office, who means to resemble Washington : that is the duty of preserving the government itself, of suffering, so far as depends on him, no one branch to interfere with another, and no power to be assumed not belonging to each, and none abandoned which pertains to each ; but to

preserve it and carry it on unharmed for the benefit of the present and future generations.

Gentlemen, a wise and prudent shipmaster makes it his first duty to preserve the vessel which carries him, and his passengers, and all that is committed to his charge; to keep her afloat, to conduct her to her destined port with entire security of property and life; that is his first object, and that should be the object, and is, of every Chief Magistrate of the United States, who has a proper appreciation of his duty. His his first and highest duty is to preserve the Constitution which bears him, which sustains the government, without which everything goes to the bottom; to preserve that, and keep it, with the utmost of his ability and foresight, off the rocks and shoals, and away from the quick-sands; to accomplish this great end, he exercises the caution of the experienced navigator. He suffers nothing to betray his watchfulness, or to draw him aside from the great interest committed to his care, but is always awake, always solicitous, always anxious, for the safety of the ship which is to carry him through the stormy seas.

"Though pleased to see the dolphins play,
He minds his compass and his way;
And oft he throws the wary lead,
To see what dangers may be hid,
At helm he makes his reason sit;
His crew of passions all submit.
Thus, thus he steers his barque and sails
On upright keel, to meet the gales!"

Now, gentlemen, a patriot President, acting from the impulses of this high and honorable purpose, may reach what Washington reached. He may contribute to raise high the public prosperity, to help to fill up the measure of his country's glory and renown; and he may be able to find a rich reward in the thankfulness of the people,

"And read his history in a nation's eyes."